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THE INDIA WE SAW

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By THE HON.
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DEDICATION

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TO ALL THOSE WHO SHARED THE
HEAT AND BURDEN OF THE DAY

FOREWORD

THE following pages have been written not merely with the purpose of recording the journeyings and investigations undertaken by the Royal Statutory Commission. My intention has rather been to provide for those who are interested in the Indian Constitutional Problem material which, together with other available sources of information, I venture to hope will assist them to form opinions upon whatever recommendations may ultimately be submitted to the Imperial Parliament.

I am also anxious to make it clear that in preparing this, my own version of the genesis of the Simon Report, I have not entered into consultation with any of my former colleagues on the Indian Statutory Commission. The responsibility for the statements, views, and opinions expressed therein is mine exclusively.

E. C.

11 ILCHESTER PLACE,
HOLLAND PARK.

CHAPTER I

WHEN in the year 1919 the Government of India Act was amended, as a result of the investigations undertaken by Lord Chelmsford and Mr. Montagu into the Indian constitutional problem, a clause was inserted therein to the effect that at the expiration of every ten years from the institution of the reforms a Royal Commission should be sent out to India in order to report to Parliament as to their progress and effects. In the summer of 1927, although the statutory period had not yet expired, the Government of the day, doubtless in response to considerable pressure from Indian politicians, who are not conspicuous for patience, whatever other virtues they may be endowed with, decided to anticipate the date of the Commission's appointment.

It is noteworthy that in the Act itself there is no very clear indication as to the precise character of its composition. Lord Chelmsford some time later, in my hearing, expressed the opinion that, despite the ambiguity of the

clause, he never entertained any doubt that an exclusively Parliamentary Commission had been intended and, although he was not in a position to vouch for the views of the late Mr. Edwin Montagu on the subject, he believed that the latter had shared his opinion. The Government, on the other hand, must have been assailed in the first instance with some misgivings as to what the clause exactly signified, for discussion had evidently taken place with regard to the feasibility of including Indians in its personnel.

After I had accepted the invitation of the Prime Minister to serve on the Royal Commission I was privileged to have one or two preliminary conversations with Lord Birkenhead, at that time Secretary of State for India. Although I have preserved no minute of those interviews, two matters that were discussed survive in my recollection. He informed me that the Indians who were prepared to co-operate with the British Government had advocated the setting up of a Round Table Conference, but that the suggestion had been condemned in authoritative quarters as outside the range of practical politics. He also imparted to me the information that the expediency of including Indians on the Commission had been contemplated by

the Government both at home and in India, and that, although at first Lord Irwin was not averse to the suggestion, it had proved unacceptable on a broad view. He propounded various reasons for this decision, some of which he reproduced in his speech during the appropriate debate in the House of Lords. There can be little doubt that, whatever other objections could have been urged against such a course, the consideration which weighed most against the inclusion of Indians was the impossibility of obtaining an agreed report if even only the major Indian communities were represented. This diagnosis seemed to be based upon logical reasoning and was abundantly vindicated by the subsequent course of events. But, reviewing the whole matter in the light of all that has since occurred, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that a report which was destined to be repudiated by the Indian intelligentsia and ignored by the Imperial Government would have been equally valuable whether it had been divided into two separate volumes of contradictory recommendations or whether it had been presented to His Majesty in an agreed form.

I was careful to question Lord Birkenhead as to whether he anticipated any trouble in India from the deliberate exclusion of repre-

sentative Indians from the Commission. He replied that, although inevitably there would be an outcry in certain quarters, he did not believe that it would endure and that ultimately we should experience no great difficulty on that account. I could not myself feel quite so sanguine. As events proved, there can be no question that both the Cabinet in England and the Government of India had egregiously underestimated the effect which the exclusion of Indians from the Commission was destined to produce.

As I sat conversing with him in his small bay-windowed room overlooking the Horse Guards Parade, I wondered to myself what motive had induced Lord Birkenhead to accept the India Office. He did not seem to have his interests centred there and was obviously relieved that the formidable problem of the Indian Constitution had temporarily been transferred to shoulders other than his own. It may have been that already the evening shadows were beginning to lengthen and draw up across his path, although at that time there was no outward indication that his intellectual faculties had passed the meridian.

The initial proposal made to those who had consented to serve on the Commission was that a considerable time should be spent both

in India and England taking evidence and acquiring by every possible means a familiarity with the conditions which should govern our recommendations, that we should eventually make our report to His Majesty, and that Parliament—following upon the precedent set when the Montagu-Chelmsford report was laid upon the table—should amend the Government of India Act, that consequently a select committee of both Houses should sit—upon which unquestionably the Royal Commission should be represented—and that our report, along with any other available material, should form the basis of discussion. It is difficult to entertain any doubt that seven members of the Imperial Parliament, all of whom had considerable interests both public and private claiming their attention; would be reluctant to accept the sacrifice of time and labour which service on the Commission involved, upon any other terms.

When Parliament met in the autumn, the Prime Minister lost no time in announcing the personnel of the Royal Commission to the House of Commons. The Secretary of State repeated the same formality in the Upper House and, by an ominous coincidence, in the course of the subsequent discussion the whole

of the lights in the Palace of Westminster were extinguished, the noble occupants of the red benches having to continue the debate disconsolately by the light of a few guttering candles.

These simultaneous announcements met with anything but a favourable reception. A howl of expostulation went up from the ranks of the Congress Party in India, and in England there was not wanting a chorus of disapproval from both expected and unexpected quarters. With regard to the former I could only feel that for Indian political aspirants who maintained that the government of India might at once be handed over to men who had absolutely no previous experience of governing anything, it was manifestly inconsistent on their part to criticize the inexperience of those who had been called upon to assume the comparatively limited responsibilities which service on the Royal Commission entailed, and to the critics in England our report and the general verdict on our report can be my only reply—for what such a reply is worth.

The Royal Commission for good or ill was set up in the autumn of 1927 under the sign-manual of the King-Emperor, the personnel being approved *nemine contradicente* by both

Houses of Parliament. It was decided that we should proceed to India early in the New Year. The purpose of this preliminary tour was not so much the intention of taking evidence as for the members to gain some experience of the working of legislatures, local government institutions, educational centres and any other public departments which mainly concerned the problem we had been set to unravel and also to form in the mind's eye some picture of the real India with which we were asked to deal. Thus launched on our career, if not with general approval at any rate with Parliamentary sanction, we set about the unenviable task which had been imposed upon us.

Our first meeting, which was of an informal character, took place in November. On that occasion Sir John Simon invited his colleagues to dinner in the precincts of the House of Commons to meet Sir Alexander Muddiman, the Governor-designate of the United Provinces, one of those eminent civil servants who had risen not only to the top of his profession but also high in the estimation of his fellow-men. We had looked forward to receiving from him invaluable assistance, but before we had been many months engaged upon our task the hand of death deprived us

of the light of his countenance and the inestimable benefit of his co-operation.

We held a few preliminary meetings of the Commission before Christmas in the India Office with the purpose of gaining some instruction in the elementary facts of the existing situation. What we then learnt revealed to us some measure of the formidable responsibility we had undertaken. Every member of the Commission since his appointment in July had been supplied with a veritable library of books, State papers and miscellaneous documents which had any bearing upon the subjects comprised in the terms of reference. Nothing could have exceeded the solicitude of Sir Arthur Hirtzel and his colleagues at the India Office to render us every material assistance within the range of their resources.

The first communication that we received from the Viceroy appeared to be somewhat more reassuring than we had anticipated, but from all the evidence procurable it had at once become manifest that the main body of the Hindu intelligentsia had decided upon an attitude of intransigence. Reports reached England of the most vehement criticisms from that quarter which influenced Sir John Simon to the extent that he contemplated sending a

conciliatory message from the Commission. Objections to such a course were sufficiently obvious. We might by this means convey to the Indian agitators that we viewed their hostility with grave concern, and to betray any misgivings on this account would have proved disastrous. The message, far from propitiating, might have merely afforded the enemy a further opportunity to blaspheme. While anything in the nature of a proclamation might appear presumptuous, on the other hand anything in the nature of an apologia, underestimating the authority with which Parliament had undoubtedly invested us, was bound to yield results the very reverse of what it was designed to effect. There did not seem to be sufficient reason why we should eat of the bread of humiliation for the benefit of those who had no intention of being propitiated and were only likely to relent if we on our side held our ground. But the message was drafted.

It happened by a coincidence that Sir John Simon had recently been associated in England with the Pundit Motilal Nehru in a case before the Privy Council, a circumstance which provided an opportunity for this distinguished Indian lawyer and political leader to meet some of the members of the

Commission in order that we might indulge in an exchange of views a few weeks before we set out upon our momentous journey. The Pundit, somewhat to our surprise, accepted the invitation. Of all the bitter and irreconcilable opponents with whom the Government of India had been brought into contact during recent years, Motilal Nehru and his son stand out the most conspicuous. The history of the father's sudden *volte-face*—for such it was—at an advanced age seemed to the outside world unaccountable. Until middle life he had pursued a very distinguished career at the Bar, not taking any leading part upon the political stage in India. Socially he was for many years a warm friend of the English community and delighted to dispense to his English friends a generous hospitality. Suddenly and for some reason of which there are so many versions it is impossible to make any selection as the correct one, he became our most inveterate foe.

On the occasion of his meeting with us he made little enough concealment of his asperity against the British raj and he spared our feelings in no respect. We were studiously polite in return. Curious that he should have shown himself so occidental, we so oriental in demeanour, especially as, on this occasion,

he was the recipient and the Englishman the dispenser of hospitality. He spoke of his recent visit to Moscow. He was obviously not taken in by the blandishments of his Russian hosts, but he gave me the impression that he held himself free to make whatever use of their services a favourable opportunity might afford. Anything more incongruous or unholy than an alliance between a high-caste Brahmin and the Soviet leaders could hardly be conceived—but such a consideration would have been unlikely to weigh with one in his existing frame of mind. We asked him in so many words why he thought the failure of the Royal Commission was a foregone conclusion. He replied that, in virtue of the fact that the question of defence and the question of the Indian States had been excluded from our terms of reference, our recommendations could be of no value. As " the increasing association of Indians in every branch of Indian administration " was one of the matters expressly indicated for our research, it was obvious that the organization, recruitment and control of the Army came within our purview. Curiously enough the external defence and the internal security of his native land were questions that at no time had seemed to agitate this distinguished pundit or

indeed any of his colleagues. These same problems troubled us exceedingly throughout the long period of our service upon the Commission and we did not shirk the issue, as the report surely testifies. But the special features of India's military problem, the incessant exposure to invasion on her northern frontier, the chronic menace on the "home front," seem never to have claimed the serious attention of the Hindu intelligentsia at all. The Pundit Nehru's own contribution to the solution of this intricate problem is to be found—after some searching be it said—in that amazing document entitled, with little enough justification, the "All Parties" Conference Report, where in the introduction it is suggested that "the Indian Army"—whatever that term may signify, and it is certainly ambiguous—should be handed over lock, stock and barrel to the control of Ministers—presumably Indian. It has since occurred to us to wonder why he who had himself given this matter no serious attention whatsoever should be so insistent that it was absolutely crucial.

With regard to the Indian States, although the Pundit was correct in his assumption that we could not make any definite recommendations on this problem in view of the fact

that our terms of reference were related solely to British India, that the situation as between the Indian Rulers and the Paramount Power were expressly excluded, that no constitutional change could be made which directly affected the States without the consent of the Princes, and that we were not empowered to take any evidence from them, at the same time even at that date it was obvious to us that the future fortunes of the States were so inextricably woven with the fortunes of British India that we could not afford to ignore the points of contact in any recommendations we might make. The scheme of a Federation of All India had occurred to Sir John Simon and his colleagues as soon as we had progressed sufficiently in our investigations to formulate any scheme whatsoever. The idea gained in favour the closer we studied the problem. Eventually the suggestion which we made two or three years later for a Round Table Conference had its origin in the necessity we felt for an opportunity to be afforded to the Indian Rulers to join with British India in contributing suggestions as to how their conflicting interests might be reconciled.

But the Pundit refused to be convinced on these or any other matters. He seemed

invariably to argue from false premises, and when his conclusions were refuted he had recourse to the most reckless bluster. He inveighed against what he conceived to be and described as the horrors of British rule. He accused the British of having hindered India's industrial progress, although he offered no suggestion as to how the obstruction of Hindu tradition and Hindu customary law could have been set at naught by the British raj for this purpose. He finished his tirade with the emphatic statement that the credit and prestige of Englishmen in every part of India had sunk to nil. One very interesting reservation he allowed himself. He confessed that he did not share the opinion so widely held by his colleagues that time was the essence of the constitutional problem. He agreed that India could not have self-government to-morrow.

But his main preoccupation was his evidently genuine misgiving that there was no serious intention on our part now or at any future date to grant India self-government. If only he could obtain a definite assurance on that score he would be content to possess his soul in patience. He spoke slightingly in reference to the Indian Princes with whom he seemed to have little affinity. He was

throughout our conversation childishly petulant. He left us to prosecute a ceaseless vendetta against the Commission in India, having recourse to any and every expedient by which he might prejudice us in the eyes of his fellow-countrymen until the day when for the last time the sun went down upon his wrath.

In contrast to this experience it was a relief to find myself, some weeks later, discussing the Indian situation dispassionately with an English acquaintance who had lived and worked in India for forty years. It is all too much the fashion to discard the advice of any of those of our own kith and kin who have devoted long and distinguished careers in a professional capacity to the welfare of India as being unenlightened and prejudiced, but the while I walked with my mentor through the quiet lanes around Pangbourne I found in his modestly expressed views much that was confirmed by what I heard and saw during the experience that was to be mine in the ensuing years. His parting word of advice was to this effect: "Try out your experiments first in the Provinces, a breakdown there would be serious indeed, but an experiment at the Centre if it miscarried would be nothing short of a catastrophe." These words

of warning recurred to me constantly during our subsequent efforts to mould into some coherent shape a scheme for the reform of the Indian Constitution.

On the eve of departure for the Commission's first tour I was privileged to dine with a distinguished Indian then resident in London, whose gentle dignity and obvious sincerity had won for him the esteem of his fellow-subjects in England. Although I was suffering too much from the after-effects of inoculation to be as interested in the conversation as the occasion warranted, I was somewhat startled when my host expressed the view that he could not understand how any constitutional reforms could be of effect unless the Central Government, presumably a thoroughly Indianised Central Government, secured complete control over defence. The conversation commenced by Sir John Simon canvassing the idea of complete provincial autonomy subject to the existence of a strong Central Government. This expression " strong Central Government " was constantly employed by Indian witnesses at the subsequent sessions of the Commission in India, but no very precise definition of what a strong central government signified was ever vouchsafed to us. Whether it connoted respon-

sibility, and if so whether responsibility in the sense applied to the British Constitution, were questions which remained unanswered. Indian politicians are much addicted to the employment of phrases which they are reluctant or incompetent to explain in detail.

My host at once seemed to agree to the proposal of provincial autonomy, but insisted that the Army must be entirely Indian. When we cross-examined him as to whether he intended that the British Forces in India should be finally withdrawn he hesitated to reply in the affirmative, and suggested that there might be an *enclave* for British troops somewhere on the frontier, but he confessed that he had not yet devoted the amount of consideration to such a scheme which it obviously exacted.

CHAPTER II

ON the 19th January, 1928, the Commission left England. A multitude of well-wishers, including the Prime Minister and Lord Birkenhead, came to bid us God-speed at Victoria Station. Embarking on the following day at Marseilles on the P. & O. liner *Mooltan* we were able to employ the time which usually hangs heavy upon a traveller's hands immersing ourselves in the text-books and blue books which formed no inconsiderable proportion of our impedimenta.

We broke the journey at Alexandria, where Lord Inchcape had made special arrangements for us to proceed to Cairo for a few hours' respite. Here we were entertained by Lord Lloyd, at that time High Commissioner. Sir John Simon told me on the way back to the boat, which we rejoined at Ismailia, that Lord Lloyd had impressed upon him the expediency, after we had once announced our procedure, of adhering strictly to the main lines thereof and of avoiding any deviation, advice from which the overwhelming force of

circumstances subsequently constrained us to depart.

On 29th January we reached Aden, where we were greeted by the Military Governor, whose aide-de-camp handed Sir John Simon despatches from the Viceroy and from Sir Leslie Wilson, Governor of Bombay. These we discussed in the saloon of the s.s. *Rawal Pindi*, to which we had been transferred. They both independently advised us to refrain from making any announcement before our arrival. We gathered from these documents that the situation in India so far as it concerned ourselves, although still obscure, was by no means reassuring.

We arrived in Bombay Harbour on 3rd February. The atmosphere was cold and murky. Anything less like the exhilarating scene which I had gazed upon many years before on my first arrival in India could not be conceived. We might have been in the Thames at Rotherhithe. It was pouring with rain. The ardour of some luckless demonstrators, who were endeavouring to circumnavigate our ship in a steam tug in order to create a still more unfavourable atmosphere against our arrival, was effectively damped. Going up on deck I found all the available space tenanted by aggressive Hindu journalists

whose importunate curiosity we succeeded in baffling.

As soon as we landed we set out for Government House. Outside the gates of Ballards Quay we encountered the first of those hostile demonstrations with which we were destined to become so familiar all over India. It was of smaller proportions than we had anticipated, being only about one hundred strong : mainly consisting of youthful students, pathetic figures for the most part, the flotsam and jetsam of a faulty university system—one of the most tragic elements in the social life of India. So long as the universities continue to be overcrowded with these youths, many of whom hail from the villages, obsessed with ambitions to become Government clerks, or to obtain situations in the commercial houses, and for whom there is no economic demand, so long as low standards of admission and of matriculation continue to obtain, so long will the agitator here find a congenial soil in which to plant the seed of sedition. It is impossible to withhold sympathy from these deluded youths, the victims of the inexorable law of supply and demand, who are attracted from their appropriate environment to try their fortunes in spheres quite unsuited to their limited

capacities, destined, the majority of them, to encounter those deplorable moral influences to which they inevitably succumb in the unfamiliar and uncongenial atmosphere of urban life.

We sped on our way through the town at a rapid rate, no one paying the smallest heed to us, along round the sun-bathed Malabar Point, the sapphire sea on one side and brilliant-hued flowering shrubs on the other. Sir Leslie Wilson and his staff met us on the veranda of Government House, a strange building or rather fortuitous collection of bungalows, more like a sanatorium than a palace. After much-needed refreshment we gathered round the Governor in his sitting-room overlooking the shimmering waters of the bay, and extracted as much information as time would allow. He told us that he would not have been surprised had there been ten thousand hostile demonstrators to greet our arrival. He had not thought it advisable for us to prolong our sojourn in Bombay on this occasion, as the non-co-operative movement dominated the situation. As to our forthcoming investigations, he was very insistent that the financial problem was the most important which could engage our attention, one to which Indian politicians had

paid all too little heed. In the Bombay Presidency the so-called Meston Settlement, which had determined the amount of the contributions to be severally made by the Provinces to meet the Central deficit, had been an enduring source of grievance. On the subject of the Indianisation of the Services he counselled caution. He believed that Indians, although reluctant to make the admission in public, were themselves apprehensive of too rapid a transference, that frequently he had received requests from districts up-country in charge of Indians for an English official to settle their differences. We subsequently found this to be the case in other Provinces. Nor was it to be wondered at in view of the formidable responsibility which attaches to administrative posts in the All India Services, and with which the average Indian is totally unfamiliar. The great mass of the people still favoured personal rule with a wide discretion. Whatever success had hitherto attended the reform of local self-government was still largely due to the continued influence of the British District Officer, who was regarded as an unprejudiced and disinterested neutral to be counted upon in any emergency to take a broad impartial view, uninfluenced by considerations of caste or creed.

After two or three hours of such conversation in the Governor's pleasant cool room we took our departure. We had decided, acting upon advice received from home, to proceed straight up to Delhi. We were greeted at the station by two friendly deputations, one from the Moslems and another from the Depressed Classes. We could always be confident of friendly co-operation from both these communities, associated together as they were by at least one common denominator—an intense suspicion of the Brahmin.

Soon after midday we started off on one of those long dreary train journeys of which we were to experience so many during our peregrinations throughout the length and breadth of the great sub-continent. Although it is often said that India is not one country but many, there is nothing to indicate its reputed variety as viewed from the train window. With little exception it is the same desolate panorama that monotonously unfolds itself before the traveller's wearied gaze —endless dusty colourless plains, palm-trees and mud villages with occasional jungle. Very rarely a town breaks the lifeless waste of the landscape. It would be well for those who imagine that India is advancing with

giant strides to bear in mind that there are only thirty-three towns which can boast a population of over 100,000 inhabitants. Between eighty and ninety per cent. of the Indian peoples live in primitive habitations hardly distinguishable from the earth upon which they rest and of which indeed they are constructed.

In the evening Sir John Simon invited his colleagues to his compartment to discuss our immediate plans and prospects. He began in a very grave strain. In his hand he held a file of all the available information bearing upon the situation as far as it concerned our own responsibilities. He read us extracts from the reports that had been supplied to him by the various Provincial Governments. As he proceeded it became painfully obvious to us all that we were confronted with an even sterner proposition than we had previously anticipated. It was quite clear that neither the Government at home nor the Government of India had envisaged such a critical situation and that, if our mission was not foredoomed to failure, we should be constrained to recast our ideas as to the procedure to be adopted. Sir John outlined to us a scheme which he had recently conceived, subsequently embodied in a published letter

to the Viceroy, inviting the Central Government to appoint an Indian Wing to the Commission. We discussed the plan until an advanced hour of the night.

On the following evening, after another hot and dusty day in the train, we reached New Delhi Station very much after the scheduled time. Here we found most of the Government of India waiting to greet us—Sir James Crerar, Sir Denys Bray and many others. Here the Indian section of our secretariat joined us, headed by Mr. Bhore,[1] who rendered us invaluable service from the beginning to the end of our labours. After some desultory conversation we entered our cars and swung out into the New Delhi Road through a concourse of more or less hostile riff-raff who had evidently been paid to wave banners with the slogan "Go back, Simon" inscribed thereon. I asked Mr. Bhore, who accompanied me on the drive, whether these emissaries of the non-co-operative movement were in any way conscious of what their demonstration implied. He informed me that at a recent Swarajist meeting a member of the audience ventured to ask what was the nature of the Simon Commission which had called

[1] Now Sir Joseph Bhore, K.C.I.E., Member of the Viceroy's Council.

forth so much rancour and ill-feeling, and received a reply to the effect that it was so called because it took commissions on all goods sold upon the day of its arrival, hence the expediency of declaring a *hartal* and closing down business until it had taken its departure. But I can well believe that a few annas satisfied the curiosity of the majority of those who demonstrated in the streets against us far more effectively than any elaborate explanations of such a character.

We arrived without let or hindrance at the Western Hostel in New Delhi. Countless telegrams of welcome and the reverse poured in upon Sir John Simon all day and all night during the first week of our sojourn. Bad news of rioting came from Madras, but from other "fronts" the reports were satisfactory in spite of gloomy forebodings to the contrary. Beyond one of our motor-cars running over a child in the native quarter of Delhi, mercifully with no evil consequences, our first days in the capital passed without contretemps. A fear haunted me throughout our tour that we might by some unhappy chance kill one of the innumerable sacred cattle that wander leisurely and tortuously along every thoroughfare. Far more effective in prejudicing the unsophisticated millions of India against us

than any amount of political propaganda would have been such a headline in the vernacular Press as "Commission car kills cow."

On Sunday, 4th February, members of the Commission were invited to confer with Lord Irwin at the Viceregal Lodge—the former residence of the Viceroy situated on the northern slopes of the famous Ridge. After a largely-attended luncheon party, Lord Irwin convened a meeting between ourselves and the members of his executive on the lawn, and there, in a very lovely setting of flower garden, took place a conference which might be regarded as the initiation of our arduous efforts to beat out a form of constitution for the Indian Empire. In the blazing sun we sat round His Excellency, who must have been unaware that his newly-arrived guests had not been rendered proof against its strength by recent samples of the English climate. The conference consisted of the Viceroy (Lord Irwin), the Commander-in-Chief (Sir William Birdwood), the Finance Minister (Sir Basil Blackett), the Home Member (Sir James Crerar), the Commerce Member (Sir George Rainy), and the Indian Members of the Viceroy's Council (Sir Mohamed Habibulah, Mr. S. R. Das and Sir Bhupendra Mitra).

We were joined by Sir Stanley Jackson, the

Governor of Bengal. The Viceroy requested Sir John Simon to open the proceedings. The Chairman commenced by explaining our proposals for varying the original procedure, which, with slight emendations, were heartily approved by the Viceroy's executive. The latter did not seem, as we had already sufficiently realized, to have faced up to the situation or appreciated its serious nature. No one ever faces up to a situation in India. Everyone procrastinates in the hope of "something turning up" or rather of something turning round. People and situations in India turn round in an incredibly short space of time without any very apparent motive or reason.

We discussed the draft of the letter it was proposed we should address to the Viceroy on the subject of our altered tactics. A suggestion had been made in the first instance that we should address it to the President of the Council of State and the President of the Assembly—but as the latter (Mr. Patel) was well known at that time to be employing all his available weapons against us, we decided that such a course would be, to say the least of it, inexpedient.

The letter was one of great length. Its composition made a considerable claim upon

our resourcefulness and ingenuity in virtue of the fact that, while it was intended to propitiate those who had been affronted by the exclusion of Indians from our midst, it was out of the question that we should abrogate any of the powers and responsibilities conferred upon us by the King-Emperor acting through the Imperial Parliament. The full text is to be found in our report. Our suggestion, briefly stated, was that the material which the Government of India and the Provincial Governments had prepared for us should come before a "joint free conference" over which Sir John Simon would preside, consisting of the seven British Commissioners and a corresponding body of representatives chosen by the Indian legislatures both Central and Provincial. This suggestion we hoped and anticipated would enlist the co-operation of many Indians who had hitherto remained intractable or who had not committed themselves to any definite line of action. The conference broke up after giving a unanimous and cordial assent to the proposal.

A few days later we held a conference on the subject of broadcasting our letter. It was decided to publish it in Delhi one evening and simultaneously to wire its contents

to the Press at home. It came as a rude shock to the Swarajist Party. We heard from a secret source what transpired at a special meeting they held to discuss the line of action it demanded from themselves. They received the letter the same evening that it was sent out for publication. It was a document which obviously exacted the most careful consideration, but, as our antagonists were quick to realize that it would prejudice their campaign against us in the Provinces and in the Press, they deemed that prompt action on their part, however ill-considered, would serve their purpose better than any protracted process of reflection. In the midst of this discussion one of their number suggested that conceivably it might be profitable to read the letter before taking any precipitate decision, and expressed his intention of repairing to an adjoining room to master its contents away from the din and confusion of their deliberations. The majority had evidently taken only a perfunctory glance at its proposals, and, learning that it would appear in the next morning's Press, decided to publish simultaneously a manifesto to the effect that they had rejected the overtures of the Commission. Thus commenced that exasperating game of

manœuvre and counter-manœuvre with which so much of our valuable time, which should have been employed in a manner more profitable, was irretrievably wasted.

During our stay in Delhi our office was located in a suite of rooms usually occupied by the Chamber of Princes in the new Parliament House, a vast rotunda architecturally out of keeping with Indian conceptions, a departure from tradition perhaps not altogether without its significance. It was here that we received deputations and held our conferences. These were always very harmonious. As a team we worked well together. The credit for this smooth collaboration must be given to Sir John Simon, who in the most trying circumstances preserved an equanimity that must have been the admiration even of those who endeavoured to disturb it.

The situation in Delhi, as far as it concerned the Commission, was for the present anything but propitious. The Swarajists had proclaimed both a political and a social boycott. By a coincidence several of their leaders, notably Lala Lajput Rai and Mr. Jinner, were residing at the same hotel as ourselves. The former on one occasion I was introduced to, but he made it evident

that he had no inclination for social intercourse with any member of the Commission. This was my loss and my regret, as I would have valued personal contact with one of the most remarkable figures in the forefront of Indian politics at that time. Lala Lajput Rai had many admirers amongst the British community and Indians of every shade of opinion. One and all were agreed that he was single-hearted in his desire to do the best that in him lay for his fellow-countrymen. In appearance he was insignificant. He affected the loose-fitting *khadda* and the singularly unbecoming Gandhi cap—a uniform never considered complete without the inevitable black umbrella and obtrusive sock suspenders. Mr. Jinner in character and appearance was very different. He was always immaculately and correctly attired in European dress. To his own countrymen he was something of an enigma and perhaps rather liked to pose as the inscrutable unknown quantity. At the time he was endeavouring to play a rôle which he subsequently found it impossible to sustain. A Moslem himself, he hoped to form a Moslem party in the fold of the Congress.

There were others of the Swarajist Party who occasionally crossed our path in Delhi

during our first visit, but of these it is only necessary to make allusion to Mr. Patel, at that time President of the Assembly, who complained that we had not left cards upon him on our first arrival. As he had consistently refused to meet us at dinner and as we knew him to be encouraging the hostile attitude of his political confederates towards us, it was unintelligible that he should take umbrage at our reluctance to accord him those civilities which, under normal circumstances, were due to his illustrious office.

Both at home and in India it has frequently been stated that the fact that we were debarred from any association with the only organized political party in India rendered our labours, if not abortive, at any rate of very little account. This estimate of our situation was for various reasons an entire misconception. In the first place, although the Congress Party was certainly the only party to have an efficient and effective organization, it was by no means unanimous. In fact, there was as much discrepancy between the views held by the left wing and the right wing of Congress on the subject of the Indian Constitution as there was between the right wing and those Indians who

co-operated with us. The Congress Party endeavoured and, owing to this cleavage in their ranks, failed to produce an agreed scheme. In the second place, although we would have welcomed discussion with such men of light and leading as the Pundit Malaviya, we were fully aware of the views which they would have pressed had they consented to supply us with evidence, views which we well knew were neither acceptable to the Imperial Parliament nor compatible with the responsibilities from which, under no consideration, could the British raj be relieved.

On the other hand, it would be idle to deny that it was a grievous disappointment to Sir John Simon and his colleagues that we had not the advantage of discussions with the more level-headed and experienced of the non-co-operators, such as Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. Jayaker, and others, who were later to take so prominent a part upon the Round Table Conference, although it is doubtful if our report would have been modified in any of the main essentials had that privilege been ours.

While in Delhi we seized every opportunity to get into touch with the various military authorities, whom we questioned closely on

the subject of the Indianisation of the Army. At that period they took the view, which they seem to have modified since, that, although it might be a practical proposition in the course of time, it could not materialize for many years to come, and that it must depend upon proved efficiency and the right type of Indian officer being found. Such a type was the exception rather than the rule. A military tradition must be built up in Hindu families, but at present, except in the Punjab, such a tradition did not exist. A distinguished Civil Servant present on one of these occasions shrewdly observed that whereas the British Government went too slow in the old days, it was now accelerating the pace too quickly. However that may be, the Indianisation of the Army will remain one of the most baffling problems that Indians will have to face for many years to come.

We were afforded various opportunities, formal and informal, of discussing matters with those Indian members of the legislatures who refused to be influenced by the extremists. We quickly discovered in our association with them that, whatever conclusions they had arrived at, they were not so much influenced by realities, by the actual

conditions of India and the prospects of those conditions remaining unaltered for some time to come, as by their *amour propre*. At every turn we encountered the haunting fear that their capacities for government were being underrated, that our suggestions were being influenced by a desire to keep them subordinate, and that any deviation from Western models and Western ideals was derogatory to their dignity and their status within the Empire.

Nor was this obsession the sole cause of our embarrassment in comparing notes with those Indians who were generous enough to give to us the benefit of their collaboration. From the first we detected not only a predilection for catch phrases which seemed to have no intelligible relationship to the real conditions of India, but also a deplorable inability to translate their theories into practice. The Indian politician is amazingly fluent, a dangerous characteristic when not reinforced by those qualities of mind which render the orator capable of constructive suggestion. There is a certain blithe optimism about the average Indian that deludes him into believing that everything will work out satisfactorily if only you supply him with a time-table.

In the meantime intrigue was in full swing. Various emissaries from the opposite camp would crawl up the back stairs of the Western Hostel and solicit interviews with Sir John Simon, but no progress was made in detaching them from their more intractable associates. What concerned me more than any slender hope of making inroads on the enemy's position was that I had imagined that the Ministers and other persons in authority at the Centre would be ready and would find it in their interest to confer with us. The Viceroy himself was very solicitous on this account. But any such anticipation proved illusory. Although we were regaled with much hospitality, when it came to business discussions with the Central Government we became aware of a certain aloofness and detachment which is traditionally characteristic and which rendered the chances of our deriving any substantial assistance from that quarter remote.

Here in Delhi, as elsewhere, we were entertained on a lavish scale. The ceremonial side of our tour—the public luncheons, dinners, and garden parties that punctuated our labours—was most exhausting, but it would be curmudgeonly not to pay a tribute of gratitude to all those who in so generous a

measure did their best to extend to us hospitality and kindly welcome. The Indian is an ideal and a perfect host, from the great ruler in all the panoply of his gilded state down to the headman of the most obscure village, with his humble but no less ungrudging entertainment. One and all are actuated by the tradition of hospitality which from time immemorial has been the most sacred obligation of the East, observed in India with a generosity almost outside our Western philosophy. We were told that many of those who instituted the social boycott of the Commission found it very much " against the grain " to act so contrary to their innate good taste and traditional liberality.

Two or three expeditions up-country were arranged for us during our first stay in Delhi. On one of these we set off at an early hour for Meerut, a tedious and terribly dusty drive of 43 miles, during the whole of which our progress was constantly impeded by those antiquated bullock-wagons which never seem capable of deciding which side of the road they intend to pass, and reach the maximum degree of ambiguity just as the opposing vehicle is upon them. On arrival at our destination we were directed to the Circuit

House where we met the Commissioner, Mr. Oakden, and his Deputy, Mr. Edge, who took charge of us. The latter told us that previous to our arrival he had put the Swarajist demonstrators, who pursued us everywhere, on a false scent. We were taken to see the Court House and the Revenue Collecting Department, both of which looked very ramshackle. In the afternoon we motored 20 miles to inspect two typical up-country villages.

For anyone who wishes to get at the root of the Indian constitutional problem, it is absolutely essential to realize that the vast majority of the Indian peoples are village dwellers and that the life of the village is the real life of India. Having seen a great number of villages in various parts of the Indian Empire on various travels, I have come to the conclusion that, considering the size of the country, its diversity of race, language, climate and creed, it is remarkable how similar one Indian village is to any other. A description of one, therefore, can be used for the purpose of generalization.

Although not always agreeable to every physical sense, Indian villages are not unpleasant to the sense of sight. The mud of which the dwellings and buildings are con-

structed is of a shade ranging from pink to yellow, blending well enough with the deep emerald of the palms by which they are overshadowed, and the brighter green of the crops by which they are surrounded. The streets are narrow, windows are exiguous, and paving practically non-existent. The clean plain outline of the walls is too often defiled with drying cow-dung, moulded into cakes with the human fingers for purposes of fuel. The village well is, as a rule, constructed on anything but sanitary lines. There seems little or no variety in the dwelling-houses. There is no external decoration on any, save possibly the house of the money-lender, to whom most of the inhabitants are irretrievably indebted, to indicate variety of class or wealth. There is no well-to-do middle class as in European countries. Socially the village seems to be on a dead level.

Dogs of promiscuous ancestry infest the whole neighbourhood. The excuse that they are scavengers is scarcely a sufficient justification for their miserable existence. Bulls and cows, which are never allowed by Hindu custom any but a natural death to put an end to the sufferings of old age, stroll along the streets and make a narrow margin of

subsistence still narrower for the inhabitants by their ceaseless depredations. In many parts of India monkeys for religious or superstitious reasons are also allowed without let or hindrance to destroy whatever their appetite or fancy induces them to destroy. It is not too much to say that Hindu religion and custom form a barrier to the economic progress of the village. In this connection I would quote from the latest edition of the India Office publication, *Moral and Material Progress of India*: "Probably in no country in the world where the average production is so low, do the inhabitants expend so large a proportion of their resources upon socio-religious obligations such as festivals, marriages and funerals."

The vast majority of the village population is illiterate, and in many cases where youths have been taught to read and write, too often, as our education committee reported, they drop back into illiteracy—having no incentive from the nature of their environment to better their condition in this respect. The occupation of the men is, of course, agricultural, but unless perennial irrigation is available, climatic conditions restrict operations in this direction to a few months in the year. The fragmentation of the agricultural

holdings inevitably renders each occupant's share so contracted that it cannot in the nature of things provide continuous work for anyone. Some of the village dwellers migrate to the towns at certain seasons for factory work, but the rest, when not tilling the soil, must find time heavy on their hands. I have often wondered what they concern themselves with or what they find to discuss with one another in the dead season. It may be that co-operative enterprise and the laudable village uplift movement recently initiated will both ultimately contribute to the amenities of village life, and provide the more intelligent with intellectual occupations, but these new influences are at present only in an embryo stage of development.

The women, as a rule, are of a menial type and lead the lives of drudges, the victims most probably of the many tribulations which Katherine Mayo has so frankly described in *Mother India*. The physique of the villagers varies widely in various parts of India, but the majority betray unmistakable signs of malnutrition and early marriage.

The Indian village is, as a rule, remarkably self-contained, as indeed it needs to be where communications are so faulty or in many

cases non-existent. It supplies itself with food. The simpler types of craftsmen, carpenters, weavers and so forth, form an essential part of the community. Many of the villages are approached by only a footpath—others, especially those in the neighbourhood of railway stations, where presumably the inhabitants have been rendered more sophisticated by this mechanical connection with modern civilization, are better provided. The motor-lorry has only recently commenced to make its beneficial influence felt.

The Hindu village dweller seems on the whole to be more superstitious than religious —although I hesitate to dogmatize on a subject which only those who have lived amongst the people are qualified to argue. Often there lacks even the semblance of a temple in the village of the mofussil, although there are always pathetic evidences of belief in magic and spirits—" stocks and stones " held in dread or veneration.

The conclusion I have reached, after visiting many villages in many parts of India on this and other occasions, is that their inhabitants are still in a primitive state of civilization utterly remote from the political movement which some authorities to-day tell

us is agitating the rural populations from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin. Enthusiasts may delude themselves into believing that great changes are imminent and that there is a perceptible infiltration of political consciousness amongst the masses, but when we toured up-country on the business of the Royal Commission such a process had certainly not begun to be apparent to the naked eye.

Often have I turned away from visiting an Indian village resolving in my mind grave doubts as to how far we might be justified in recommending a form of constitution, suitable enough to highly cultured peoples, for those circumstanced as are the Indian peasants. Surely, only if a complete and rapid change alters the whole aspect of that village life which is lived by at least eighty per cent. of the population, could such an experiment prove to be appropriate.

The Indian politician is never tired of drawing analogies between his own country and our other dominions, but such analogies hardly exist at all to-day and will only be complete when and if the whole social and industrial aspect of India has undergone a marked transformation, which obviously cannot result without a fabulous expenditure, above all on

education and communications, two essential services which in the mofussil are interdependent.

In devising a constitution for India it is incumbent upon us to keep her present economic circumstances clearly in mind. Sir Walter Layton, who accompanied the Commission as financial adviser, and who may be regarded as an optimist on the subject of Indian finance, lays it down in our report that the utmost economies in the Army budget would not yield a sufficient margin, without additional resources, to finance the formidable expenditure that will be necessary if India is to make any satisfactory progress towards the desired goal.

To anyone who has been at pains to explore the whole problem the conception that increased taxation of a few wealthy zemindars would supply the requisite margin of revenue and that by this means India would be able to finance adequately the nation-building services, must appear completely fantastic. Only by becoming industrialized and by the agricultural system being completely revolutionized could India obtain sufficient accretion of revenue to enable her to forge ahead in the manner dreamed of by the less responsible leaders of the Congress Party.

We are apt to regard India as a wealthy country, or at any rate a country with incalculable potential resources. It may be that there are potential resources hidden away beneath the unmined or untilled soil. But great risks and a vast expenditure will be necessary to reveal those resources to the light of day. That India is at present a wealthy country is a popular fallacy to be attributed no doubt in its origin to the tradition of rich "nabobs" who came back to England over a century ago to spend lavishly the wealth which most of them had acquired by devious methods. The fairy tales of the Gorgeous East have done nothing to detract from the legend. I am afraid that the bald truth is that India is a poverty-stricken country and that her resources for many years to come will be exiguous.

If that verdict is accepted, then all the recommendations, contained in various recent State papers, for rapid and revolutionary constitutional changes in India can only be appropriate to her circumstances if they undergo a very remarkable and unexpected metamorphosis. Such a miracle cannot be performed merely through the grant of political responsibility. The peoples of India are not politically conscious in the sense that the

people of Australia and the people of Canada are politically conscious. Nor can they be made so merely by the exertions of the agitator or by the use of the wireless as some optimists in their lighter moments have suggested. They can only be made politically conscious and, it should be added, politically competent, by means of education and the opening up of the remote and trackless districts which characterize much the greater part of the whole country, and for these State services it will be necessary to appropriate expenditure far in excess of what India can collect from the taxpayer for many years to come.

Bearing these things in mind as I travelled over India, I came to the conclusion that, as the prospects of obtaining the necessary revenue to make the granting of a constitution based upon the conditions and circumstances of wealthy and highly civilized Western states a practical proposition were remote, no undue haste in bringing the constitution into complete conformity with the democracy of countries with which there was no analogy whatsoever, should be allowed to prejudice the efforts of those who sincerely desire that India should reach the ultimate goal, but should approach it by cautious successive

stages rather than by perilous leaps and bounds.

Another of our expeditions of instruction "up-country" was arranged for the purpose of visiting the Gurgaon district, justly rendered famous by the enterprise of the District Commissioner, Mr. Brayne, whose schemes of village "uplift" have become a household word in British India.

Our destination over the Punjab border was reached after a journey of some 25 miles. When we arrived at Mr. Brayne's bungalow we found all the village notables drawn up in the shade of the veranda, a picturesque and ill-assorted group, waiting to be introduced to us. This formality being completed, we were taken by our host and hostess into the township of Gurgaon, where demonstrations were given to us of the various methods employed to improve the lot of the villager—a school of sewing, cookery and other forms of domestic training for the wives, a child welfare centre, and a normal school. The most intriguing exhibit was an establishment for the instruction of young men in the various concerns of agriculture. The youths undergoing this course were dressed after the fashion of Boy Scouts. At the time of our visit they were gathered round a lecturer who was demon-

strating a new bloodless method of the castration of bulls which, so it appears, obviates any offence against the religious scruples of either the Moslem or the Hindu. The Commissioner seemed to be of the unorthodox opinion that, with the exercise of a certain degree of tact and discretion, some of the traditional prejudices of the Indian villager can be overcome. This view might well receive general acceptance in virtue of the fact that religion evidently does not assume any very definite form in the mofussil beyond the propitiation of tutelary deities and the strict observance of the rule against killing cows. It may well be that, here and in other districts where attempts at social reform have been undertaken, the British raj has proved rather too sensitive in its anxiety to avoid outraging the feelings of those who still cling with a pathetic loyalty to those fantastic superstitions which, in these backwaters of human existence, have grafted themselves on to the main stock of Hindu ethics. Some deviation from prudence in this respect is surely justifiable considering that so many of the primitive Hindu customs and tenets are seriously prejudicial to the health and prosperity of the people. It must be accounted to them for virtue that certain of the nation-

alist leaders, less self-seeking than their colleagues, are jeopardizing their own influence and popularity in an attempt to break through the barriers of ancient custom and tradition where these defy enlightenment and progress.

We visited the boys' school. Sir John Simon, in mischievous mood, questioned the pupils as to whether they had ever heard of Edwin Montagu. There was no other response than an expression of mild bewilderment on every upturned countenance. The teacher, in extenuation of their ignorance, hastened to explain that they had only progressed in their historical researches as far as the reign of the Emperor Akbar. It was therefore legitimate for us to presume that his charges were still stagnating in the proverbial condition of "pathetic contentment."

One of the officials confided to us that the most baffling problem in these village schools was that of maintaining any adequate moral standards. The majority of the boys in the class-room we visited were already married, although their average age was between fourteen and fifteen. But marriage, we were told, acted as no safeguard against sexual offences which they could not be made to understand were detrimental to their health and to their

self-respect. Leave has to be given to these youthful husbands to visit their wives at the end of each week. On this circumstance Mr. Brayne tersely commented: "I wish I could give them a bat and ball instead." The physique of the Hindu lad is vigorous enough until he reaches the age of puberty, when, if permitted to contract an early marriage, he at once begins to deteriorate in mind and body. Early marriage is the bane of those Hindu sects that encourage such a practice.

In the afternoon we set out to visit some of the model villages of the District. The Commissioner had indeed worked miracles. He had drastically scavenged the streets, given the inhabitants wells constructed upon approved sanitary lines and instructed them in the necessity of cesspits and latrines. Most wonderful of all, he had induced them to take a pride in their own cleanliness. He had offered every encouragement to the Boy Scout movement, which has produced far and wide a very remarkable influence upon the *morale* of Indian youth. The inculcation of all these axioms of health is obviously to the good, but, although it is somewhat incomprehensible that other District Commissioners have not kept pace with Gurgaon, at the same time it is

difficult to resist the conclusion that until the Indian villager is far better educated than he is at present, and is able in consequence to appreciate the scientific reasons for all these sanitary precautions, he will continue, when the Commissioner is not supervising and controlling, to empty his refuse down the wells, and to render nugatory all such teaching by its misapplication.

Mr. Brayne had effected noteworthy improvements in the breeding of cattle—one of those very essential reforms which Indian politicians, exclusively absorbed as they are with constitution-mongering, seem to have ignored. We were shown some fine pedigree Hissar bulls in one of the villages. In the matter of cattle breeding these humble agriculturists are perfectly capable of appreciating the immense advantages of careful selection. Illiterate though he may be, the Indian villager is shrewd and responsive enough if only he is set upon the right path. But the political agitator is not his best guide and counsellor.

We spent as much time as was available in inspecting these villages, and the sun was already setting when our kind but importunate instructor begged us to visit yet one more some ten miles distant. When we ultimately

reached our destination, after abandoning our cars which had sunk up to the axles in the mud of a narrow lane, a picturesque scene revealed itself in the growing dusk. As the headman, accompanied by some two or three hundred of the villagers, came out to greet us with that engaging courtesy which seems to be one of the abiding traditions of Indian village life, there rode behind this picturesque concourse two English youths who were obviously undergoing a first experience of district administration. It was difficult to resist the impulse to question them as to what motive had induced them to leave home and all home meant and to pursue, under changed circumstances, a precarious and problematic career in this outpost of Empire. They replied in the sense that they were fully alive to all the risks they had taken, and recognized that the British Government was under an obligation to hand over to Indians those duties which hitherto had fallen to Englishmen to discharge, but that, whatever the future held in store, they were prepared to play their part loyally, to bring to the common stock the best of whatever they could contribute as long as their services were required. It was reassuring to observe that unfaltering devotion to duty and disregard of self, so char-

acteristic of the most splendid of all Imperial Services, had thus early in the official experience of these young men revealed its influence. It would be well for Indians to realize in fuller measure than is apparent what they owe to the British element in the administration of their country.

Our sojourn in Delhi did not become any more exhilarating or profitable the longer we extended it. In Delhi the Indian politician is a politician and nothing else. Whenever we endeavoured to discuss with members of the Central Legislature the problems that really matter—health, education, and other nation-building services—they were not really interested. The majority share certain characteristics which will hardly make self-government the success anticipated of it by the more credulous who colour their views with over-sanguine hopes. There is too much intrigue, too much effort misdirected. Delhi is not the best school of political thought in India. It seems to be entirely detached and aloof from the real life of the people.

But, nothing daunted, we continued the uphill task of endeavouring to extort all the information and to collect all the material which the Head Centre of the Government of India seemed capable of providing. Of the

various deputations we received it is necessary to make mention of one in particular, typical of many that we were to have experience of all over India, as it was mainly concerned with the very crux of the whole constitutional problem—a large and influential deputation from the Moslem community. As far as my own observation enabled me to judge, there seemed to be no doubt whatever that, broadly speaking, at this juncture of affairs the Moslem population of India was out to co-operate with the Government providing they could receive some tangible assurance that they would be secure from Hindu domination. The dissentients were negligible in numbers and influence.

Before leaving England we had imagined that one of the main obstacles to devising a workable constitution for India was the traditional cleavage between the two major communities, but until actual experience gave proof of its reality I for one had formed no conception of the genuine state of affairs. It was even rumoured that one of the reasons why the Congress Party was reluctant to accord any welcome to an English Royal Commission was that it was considered most undesirable from their point of view that we should be given opportunities to discover how

absolutely disintegrated India was by communal strife. Be that as it may, to understand and appreciate to the full the implications of the communal problem is to get the true measure of the complexities which made the Commission's task so harassing. Religion and race, said John Morley, are the two incendiary forces of history. If that is so, there is certainly an abundance of combustible material in India.

The intense rivalry of the two major Indian communities in recent years has been attributed to the ambition of the British raj to govern by a process of division. Nothing can be further from the truth. We have only to read the speeches of Lord Irwin on the subject, delivered during his viceroyalty, which faithfully reflect the feelings of all those British administrators in whose hands the destinies of India at present reside, to determine how gross a calumny is this estimate of the existing situation. The origin of this political phenomenon is rather to be traced to three main sources, historical, religious and ethnological, which join and flow together, reinforced by various tributaries, sometimes held in check by the foresight and energy of a vigorous administration, sometimes, when this weakens, bursting all bounds and spreading havoc in a

turbulent, irresistible flood in village and in town.

Its history is the history of the conquests *vi et armis* of the numerically larger and intellectually superior by the numerically smaller but physically stronger race, of the subsequent surrender of both to an alien rule which offered no opportunities and sanctioned no occasion for the display of mutual jealousies and suspicions. The statistics of communal riots prove beyond cavil or dispute that it was only the prospect of self-government that acted as a restorative and as a stimulant to the rivalries of the two communities.

It has sometimes been alleged that the proof that the British raj encouraged this devastating antagonism for its own sinister purposes is to be found in the circumstance that there is a complete absence of communal strife in the Indian States. Such an accusation can be refuted by the same argument which applies to the alleged attitude of the Government in British India. The reason that hitherto communal strife in the Indian States has been negligible was that, so long as there was no prospect of self-government which might give the predominant community the monopoly of place and power, there was no cause for apprehension on the one side or for

ambition on the other. Corroboration is to be found in the fact that, since the suggestion has been made that the Indian States should enter a Federation, there have been distinct indications of communal feeling within the dominions of the Indian rulers.

The cleavage is made wider yet by the difference of the religious, legal and ethical codes of Moslem and Hindu. No two religions could be more antipathetic. Both in doctrine and in metaphysics they are poles asunder. Their very ceremonies and observances are mutually antagonistic, and when to these sufficiently adequate causes for their incompatibility is added a fundamental difference of race which has never been modified by intermarriage, there surely ceases to be any room for the argument that Government was instrumental in its perpetuation.

Wherever we went this irreconcilable rivalry obtruded, flavouring every action, every opinion, of the two races. It demands above all other considerations the most scrupulous and impartial attention from those who contribute to the solution of the Indian constitutional problem. It is the big basic fact in the situation. To deny that fact is impossible; to ignore it is catastrophe.

Besides the emergence of the communal

problem so prominently at all our sessions in every part of India, another obtruded, not so persistently, but one which is undoubtedly destined to occupy the attention and to disturb the serenity of Indian politicians for many years to come: the question of the future status of the Depressed Classes. Before we left Delhi, Mr. Rajah, their nominated representative in the Central Legislature, had a long conference with the Commission.

It is a very general assumption that caste is an insuperable social barrier in India, but, even if only a modified form of democratic constitution is realized, this barrier will surely have been weakened, and when education has accomplished its inevitable levelling process the days of Brahmin ascendancy will be numbered. It has recently been said that the only discordant voice inside Hinduism comes from the Untouchables, seeing that it is the only section in which the desire to know there is a grade below it remains unsatisfied.

After much research and inquiry the Commission came to the conclusion that 30,000,000 was a judicious estimate of the numbers of the Depressed Classes. If the franchise is to be widened to the extent demanded, in the enthusiasm of the moment, by the Swarajist

leaders, the Depressed Class vote will assume formidable proportions. One cannot help speculating upon the result of enfranchising these vast numbers of downtrodden serfs on so prodigious a scale. When they realize the power that will be theirs, nursing the hatred engendered by centuries of oppression, an element peculiarly dangerous to Brahmin oligarchical ascendancy will reveal itself. However this may be, the problem of the Depressed Classes, a perpetual source of reproach to the Government of India, must be negotiated without further delay. Motilal Nehru, in a speech delivered during our first visit, attributed the appalling condition of the Untouchables to the British raj, but such an accusation has no support or sanction from history. Untouchability is an inherent part of the Hindu dogma that is to be traced back until its origin is lost in the mists of antiquity.

Before leaving Delhi we dined with Mr. Mitra[1] to meet the Viceroy and his executive council in informal conclave. We sat in a circle round Lord Irwin after dinner. He and his executive spoke in furtive and inaudible whispers. All officials in India speak *sotto voce*, a custom probably the survival of

[1] Now Sir Bhupendra Mitra, K.C.S.I., High Commissioner for India since 1931.

the days of espionage when walls had eyes and ears, and the lowest murmur from official lips found an echo in the market-place. The conversation turned upon the vote in the Assembly which was to be taken on the morrow as to whether there was to be co-operation with the Royal Commission or otherwise. Evidently the whole situation had been thoroughly mismanaged and the result was certain to be unfavourable. As to what, under those circumstances, the subsequent procedure was to be, no one seemed to be able to offer any very definite suggestion.

On the following day, the 16th, the debate took place in the Assembly, but unfortunately the death of one of the members caused the adjournment of the House before the vote was taken, and we left Delhi for our provincial tour in ignorance of what the situation was to be as between the Legislature and ourselves.

In the course of a farewell conversation with Lord Irwin he begged me to believe that our visit to Delhi had not been in vain, but it was difficult to estimate what satisfactory headway we had succeeded in making. The Viceroy himself throughout had been more than helpful. At that time the Press campaign instituted against him in England had

not yet commenced. Now, as hereafter, he stood high in the esteem not only of the Indian intelligentsia but also of the British community. His one fault seemed to be that he took it too much for granted that others conformed to as high a standard of honour as he had set himself.

Our next destination was Calcutta. The Government of India or the India Office had originally decided that we were not to visit Bengal on this occasion. Sir Stanley Jackson most strongly urged Sir John Simon to alter this decision, pointing out very properly that if we failed to visit Calcutta, not only would we alienate our friends but we should be accused by our enemies of faint-heartedness. Sir John Simon and his colleagues, contrary to what was alleged in certain sections of the Press, were throughout both tours always ready and willing to extend their peregrinations in every direction possible, especially to those parts of India where they were least welcome and most threatened. The Viceroy thoroughly supported the Governor of Bengal's advice, and so we, nothing loath, decided to visit the former capital of India—as it proved, a very wise decision.

We left Delhi at night on the 18th. There was no demonstration. I was informed that

there was always enough money forthcoming to arrange a set piece for our discomfiture on arrival, but not sufficient for the same purpose on our departure.

CHAPTER III

EARLY on the morning of the 19th February we arrived at Cawnpore, where a large number of functionaries were ranged up on the platform to greet us. They read us the usual address, adorned us with the inevitable damp hot garlands of tuberose and marigold, and gave us an official breakfast in the waiting-room, not the best meal for conversation, especially as between those who are not very familiar with each other's language. We then resumed our journey. Sir John Simon had arranged that we should indulge in some sight-seeing on the way. Hitherto we had considered it wise policy to advertise our movements in advance, as almost before we had landed in India we were accused by the Swarajist Press of slinking about our business in fear and trembling. To advertise all our movements which had reference to official duties was therefore essential, but to advertise our other movements was uncalled for and was asking for trouble from those who were at all times

prepared to take a mean advantage of our situation. However, on this occasion officialdom had been improvident enough to announce our intention of paying an unofficial visit to Benares, omitting at the same time to take those adequate precautions which circumstances required, with the result which anyone might have foreseen.

Our special train came to an unexpected halt at a level crossing outside the town. We were here met by the Chief of Police, who asked us to descend from the train as there was trouble ahead. Some students, reinforced by a motley collection of disreputable characters, had occupied the station, and some of them had placed themselves on their stomachs over the permanent way to obstruct our arrival. We accordingly availed ourselves of the motor-cars which had been provided for us at this emergency and skirted the town until we reached the railway bridge over the Ganges, where the Maharajah's motor-launch met us and conveyed us down the river front along by the Burning Ghat. We landed at the far end of the town and then our troubles began. We motored through some narrow streets towards the Golden Temple. The students, having by this time wind of our whereabouts, blocked

all the approaches in our neighbourhood and shouted themselves hoarse. The police superintendent who was with us did not seem to know what to do and accordingly did nothing. The Commissioner was growing increasingly apprehensive. We seized a favourable opportunity that presented itself of conversing with some of the students who had surrounded us, and found them not altogether in a bad humour, but evidently determined to disconcert us with every indignity. There were others in the crowd who had no intention of being conciliatory, and at one moment things looked ugly in this town of narrow streets and fanatical inhabitants. With some difficulty, amid the derisive and angry shouts of a mob at our heels, which had grown to unpleasant proportions, we were able to make our way to the police headquarters, which stands in one of the few open spaces in the whole town. Here at last the police did come to our assistance and we were able to motor away to the delightful residence of the Commissioner, where we had tea in the quiet and peace of the veranda, remote from the dust and noise of Benares.

What a striking contrast the atmosphere of an English cantonment in India always presents to the native quarter of the adjacent

town! It has been alleged by some exacting critics that the English community, both official and commercial, live their lives too much segregated from the real India, that their environment for all practical purposes is indistinguishable from England itself, thus justifying the charge of social and racial exclusiveness which has done nothing to render the relations between governors and governed more amicable. I am not prepared to say how far such accusations can be verified.

We rejoined our special train at a locality where it had been taken to avoid any repetition of the regrettable incidents of our previous experience, and at an early hour on the following morning we glided into Howrah Station at Calcutta. A wonderful welcome awaited us on the platform, packed as it was with representatives of every community, caste and creed. We were buried in garlands and had some difficulty in reaching the waiting motors owing to the too friendly attentions of officialdom. We were in some doubt as to what kind our reception would be when we drove through the main thoroughfares, but things had been well stage-managed. There were considerable crowds lining our route, part of which cheered us to the echo, as far as any Indian crowds ever can cheer to the

echo, while the remainder preserved a decorous silence. The police had evidently bottled up the Swarajist demonstrators in the side streets. A cordial welcome met us from Sir Stanley Jackson at Government House—surely the most beautiful Government House in the Empire, with its large high-ceilinged salons, its atmosphere of old Company days, and evident associations with Warren Hastings, Wellesley, and other illustrious administrators who aforetime made Bengal the centre of British authority in India.

From the moment of our arrival in Calcutta our prospects seemed to undergo a change for the better, and we experienced an elation of spirit hitherto unfamiliar. After the dreary stagnant atmosphere of Delhi, the more bracing invigorating political climate of the Provinces helped us to view the whole problem from a different perspective. In Bengal, Madras and the Punjab were to be found live men exerting every endeavour to make the reforms a working proposition. In Delhi the men of influence were either obstructionists of the type of Nehru, who, although they had proved quite incompetent to make any constructive suggestions which could even find acceptance with their own people, had acquired by their refusal to co-operate with

us a reputation for statesmanship, or of those who, however anxious they may have been to assist us, were for the most part equally devoid of constructive ability. The Provinces too often seem to send their misfits to the Central Legislature and to reserve the best men for the conduct of their own affairs. Nor, in view of all the circumstances, are they to be blamed on that account.

Our available time was short in Calcutta and a round of duties soon claimed us, the first being a formal meeting with the Governor and his executive in the Council Room convened to discuss our future plans. The Provincial Governments were evidently jealous of any interference by the Central Legislature, but Bengal itself seemed quite solicitous to furnish an Indian wing to the Commission. At the invitation of the Council we paid a visit to the Legislative Assembly, which was then in session, and where in the lobby we encountered some of the Swarajist leaders, not very impressive figures, of corpulent build, calling to mind the caricature of the Bengali Baboo made familiar to us in the pages of Mr. Anstey's works. They were asked whether they would consent to be introduced to the Commission, but they preferred to remain inaccessible.

In the evening of the first day of our visit we attended an enormous garden fête at the far end of the Maidan. This is a very favourite type of entertainment in India. We assisted at a formidable number of such convivialities while we were on tour. In Bengal, as elsewhere, we experienced the most lavish hospitality by day and by night. Evening *tomashas* in India are rendered the more attractive in virtue of their *al fresco* character. Strolling in moonlit gardens after dinner is not the least pleasant occupation of the daily round. I could only wish that some of our well-intentioned hosts had refrained from the conceit of illuminating the trees with coloured electric lights, a meretricious form of decoration which appears to me to detract from the peerless effects supplied gratis by Nature herself in so reliable a climate.

The Governor of Bengal gave a banquet to the Commission in the famous long room of Government House, a most effective setting for such a purpose with its marble floor, innumerable corinthian columns and superb chandeliers. After dinner we conversed with a succession of the men of light and leading, including at least two of the Swarajist persuasion. Here in Calcutta there was no "social boycott" as in Delhi. I found the

opposition reasonable enough in confidential intercourse. There was a sufficiency of criticism both from political friend and foe, but no constructive suggestion unless of a flagrantly unpractical nature.

We were provided with convenient offices in the town itself where all day long we received endless deputations: Moslem, Brahmin, Depressed Class, Hindu, Anglo-Indian, with always the same refrain—each community demanding separate representation in the Legislatures. Communal hostility seemed to be the sole preoccupation of the politically minded Indian. Other questions were relegated entirely to the background.

We were quite regretful to leave Calcutta, but every day that we penetrated farther into the Provinces brought with it some cheering experience to draw us out of our initial despondency.

Our departure took place early on the morning of 22nd February, a host of friends seeing us off at the station. There succeeded a dreary day in the train, spent by all of us reading state papers and reports, our studies interrupted by halts at stations where we invariably encountered friendly deputations waiting to speed us on our way. In order to save wearisome reiteration, it must be said

once and for all that throughout our tour the Swarajists had planned, most successfully, that everywhere possible there should be demonstrators waving black flags and shouting the slogan "Simon, go back," with that peculiar raucous intonation not unlike the cry of rooks in the nesting season. It was well organized, this tomfoolery. Every stratagem had been employed and a great deal of money had been spent to make its success assured, the sinews of war being provided, we were told, by wealthy Indian mill-owners and cotton merchants of Bombay, who for purposes not directly connected with our visit had entered into an incongruous alliance with the extremists. The Government of India in its wisdom did nothing to prevent these affronts being offered to the appointed Commissioners of the King-Emperor.

But, discounting these performances, which in the first instance left us undismayed, our welcome throughout the three Provinces was as gratifying as it was unexpected and entirely swamped any genuine ill-feeling that occasionally manifested itself. Whenever we travelled by train we were always met by influential deputations of the more respectable and respected citizens.

At midday on the 23rd we arrived at Gun-

tur, which was to be our salient for a series of up-country visits. It was well chosen for this purpose as it provided a real test of what effect the Commission could contrive to produce against formidable odds, being situated in what may be called the heart of the Gandhi country. It was about this district that the Mahatma initiated his no-tax-payment campaign.

The train was run into a siding and, after a midday meal, the Commissioners repaired to a goods shed which had been converted into a hall of audience, whither came various individuals and deputations to confer with us. The District Educational Officer, one Abdul Hamed, informed me he was educated at Balliol, a distinction he seemed to share with most of the official hierarchy in India. During the afternoon we motored out into the country to inspect some mission settlements, rather meagre efforts but conducted upon sound enough lines. Missionary enterprise in India, chiefly undertaken by American citizens, undoubtedly serves a very useful purpose. We were accompanied everywhere by Mr. Duff, the Commissioner, whose promising career was destined soon afterwards to be cut short by a fatal accident on shikar.

On the 24th we left our train, which we

used as an hotel, at an early hour and motored some miles to a place called Pathandpalam to make acquaintance with a village extension constructed purposely for the better housing and health of the Depressed Classes. We returned to our special train for breakfast. The rest of the morning was spent in visiting various institutions in Guntur, the Government Hospital and a most excellent college for boys endowed and conducted by Americans. The Swarajists had endeavoured to picket the college in order to prevent the boys having access to the buildings at the time of our inspection. The attempt failed egregiously. There were hundreds of young collegers who greeted us with fervent enthusiasm. We subsequently visited the District Educational Council and listened to a discussion. In the afternoon we resumed our reception of deputations in our improvised council chamber. In this way we assimilated a great deal of varied and useful information, while the vignettes of life in the rural districts that were presented to us as we travelled along provided us with more enduring impressions than we could have acquired from any desultory reading of blue books. In the evening we motored into Guntur to dine with the Judge, a Mr. Walsh, in a charming bungalow.

It is admirable the manner in which the English community cheerfully settles down in a dreary and desolate outpost of this character, instead of succumbing to nostalgia, and makes the best of whatever limited resources are available for the enjoyment of sport and social amenities.

On the 25th we again left at an early hour for a motor tour in the district. The first part of our journey lay along a road shaded by widely ramifying banyan-trees. The countryside in this part of India at this season of the year presents a smiling aspect—fields green with banana-trees, sugar cane and tobacco plant. Our first venue was at Mangalim, very picturesquely situated, a conical-shaped hill forming the chief feature of the landscape, with a Hindu temple nestling at its base. Here we were greeted and garlanded by the priestly custodians, surrounded by a concourse of amiable villagers who must have wondered what our presence among them implied. We had been preceded by a car in which were seated five nasty-looking ruffians distributing armfuls of black flags to the unsuspecting inhabitants, inciting them to shout the monotonous refrain "Simon, go back," which I have no doubt their dupes interpreted as pæans of welcome. After ex-

changing compliments with our hosts we went on our way, traversing a very lovely tract of country, mostly jungle with some impressive hills in the background. At a secluded spot by the roadside we found a small *shamiana* had been erected for us, in front of which were drawn up members of the Forest Punchayat. We had a delightful break in our journey, sitting in the grateful shade conversing with these Nature's gentlemen. We felt we could surely entrust such genuine representatives of the people with some form of self-government, in preference to the repulsive nondescripts in the car which preceded us malevolently that day wherever we went.

Our next destination was Bezwada, where we inspected some interesting irrigation works spanning the river, and where we were shown a settlement for reclaiming the criminal tribes. It is incredible that the twentieth century can anywhere provide such a phenomenon —a large community whose precarious livelihood is exclusively and unashamedly procured by the committal of every variety of crime. That India includes such a curiosity bears testimony to the infinite variety that characterizes her total population and also furnishes additional proof, if it were needed, of the immense perplexity of settling upon

a constitution which will be comprehensively appropriate to an Empire so diverse and heterogeneous.

We returned at midday to Guntur and left in our special train for Ongole, where we had a gratifying reception in spite of the sedulous efforts of the Swarajist agents to render it the reverse. A large cheerful and cheering crowd met us outside the station. Accompanied by Mr. Duff and a very pleasant Indian sub-collector who seemed somewhat oppressed with his responsibilities, we effected the usual round of institutions, Municipal High School, District Council Board, Taluk Board, ending up after nightfall at the Joint Magistrates' Office. We left to the accompaniment of acclamations from enthusiastic crowds who let off rockets and golden rain and other varieties of pyrotechnic. Give an Indian crowd fireworks and you can insinuate yourself into its favour under any set of circumstances. But apart from this artificial method of propitiating the unenlightened it was very noticeable that now and afterwards, whatever our initial reception may have been, as the day wore on and as the inhabitants of the various places we visited began to realize we were not the fiends incarnate we had been represented to be by a venomous vernacular Press, as they

observed us in friendly and sympathetic converse with all sections of the community, and taking grave interest in all their local concerns, opinion seemed to veer completely round in our favour and by the time we were taking our departure, black flags had disappeared and the whole population would join in loud-voiced approval of our visit. This was our common experience. The crowds who came to see us everywhere, whatever their motive may have been, were prodigious, both in town and village, all eager to shake hands and to make us welcome. The villager is a gentleman to his finger-tips and very easy to make friends with.

On the morning of 26th February our train glided quietly into Madras Station, where we were absolutely overwhelmed by the good will of an enormous concourse of well-wishers. Out in the main streets the people were apparently, on the whole, amicable, but owing to the riot earlier in the month supreme precautions were observed. The town bristled with police. An Indian crowd is easily kept in order by police. The demeanour of the general populace, therefore, on this occasion was little enough criterion of the real attitude of the Madrasis towards us.

We drove straight to Government House,

a delightful building—gleaming white walls with large green grass blinds shading the windows, standing in a very attractive park. Lord and Lady Goschen met us at the entrance and conducted us to a veranda, overlooking a sun-bathed courtyard ablaze with cannas of various hue, where we breakfasted. Lord Goschen, who seemed optimistic with regard to the situation, held a meeting of his Executive in the garden on the day of our arrival to meet the Commission. It was not altogether satisfactory as there was a non-co-operative element apparent and a change of ministry was pending.

On this occasion Sir John Simon dwelt at some length on the advisability of hearing evidence *in camera*. There was a certain risk that in our anxiety to be as " above board " as possible we might on that account be altogether deprived of the valuable privilege of hearing such evidence as we could only expect to be given under seal of secrecy. One of the obvious difficulties with which we were confronted everywhere was to obtain a true insight into the real feelings of those Indians who, small blame to them, would hesitate to risk the consequence of publicity.

On our first visit we discovered a very intriguing development in the party politics

of Madras. In envisaging India self-governed we are too apt to regard Hindu-Moslem rivalry as the only disintegrating factor, as the only serious obstacle to a united nation. But there are ominous fissures appearing in other directions just as the binding force of British administration is being relaxed. Far from insignificant is the breach, of which there is already sufficient evidence, in the age-old caste system which in this Province is held to be more in the nature of a rigid instinct than elsewhere in India. Predominant as the small Brahmin caste has been universally, it is in Madras where it might be expected to survive longer than in any other province, and yet it is in their very stronghold that they are most gravely threatened. Few students of the constitutional problem have given as much attention as it deserves to this phenomenon. The operation of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms revealed a very strong resentment against Brahmin ascendancy in the political life of the Presidency on the part of the intermediate castes, who formed themselves into an organization known as the Justice Party which proved triumphant in the 1920 election. While it is a fact that this and subsequent successes achieved by the non-Brahmins were primarily due to the

circumstance that the Brahmins were not prepared to work the reforms, at the same time they gave proof that the ascendancy of the latter was not any longer to go unchallenged. It is very difficult to believe that if the form of constitution to be ultimately given to India is to be thoroughly democratic, the caste system will remain unaffected or that all that has been said by the best authorities about its continuance will not prove illusory. What form a re-orientation of the whole social system of the Hindu will bring forth it is difficult to forecast, but that it will produce results unanticipated and undesired by the Congress leaders is certain.

While in Madras our secretariat was situated on the sea front with a view from the windows which was distractingly enchanting. Our offices opened on to a balcony framed in a cloud of bougainvillea. Down below, flower-beds blazed in a kaleidoscopic variety of shape and colour, beyond stretched the snow-white sands, fringing a dark-blue sea where catamarans danced through the surf of the incoming tide. Hot as Madras is at this time of year, a cool grateful breeze blows up from the sea about midday and rescues panting humanity from suffocation.

In the seclusion of this official retreat

every day we cross-examined individuals and associations of individuals. Now and subsequently throughout our tour it was a never-failing source of amusement and interest to me to witness Sir John Simon's conduct of such proceedings. He could at once penetrate through the mists that too often obscured the minds of certain of our Indian witnesses whose discursive views, if they did not betray a complete insolvency of helpful suggestion, were exasperatingly indefinite. It was intriguing to observe them listening in happy astonishment to their interrogator clearing the argument of its lumber, transposing into his lucid exposition and trenchant phrase their own disordered and incoherent ideas. Although normally indulgent and amazingly patient, he was capable of remorselessly pulverizing any who outraged his sense of logic and consistency. Nothing could present a more striking contrast than our chairman with his nimble mind, his fastidious taste for accuracy, his limpid clearness of expression and his swift detection and exposure of any flaw in an argument, and the majority of those whom he subjected to the ordeal of cross-examination.

With the exception of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Ayer, who seemed to have brought to bear

upon our problems some constructive ability, those with whom we conferred at our numerous sessions in Madras were only able to contribute ideas which they seemed at a complete loss to translate into practice.

We paid a visit to the Legislative Council on the invitation of the President. The Swarajist Party absented themselves on that account. The Council House is situated in the old Fort, a most interesting collection of buildings on the sea front, including Clive's former residence, and the office of the present Governor where he kept in constant touch with his Ministers. Thanks to Lord Goschen and his predecessor, Lord Willingdon, dyarchy had been made to work, with a not too literal interpretation of its principles and on a basis of mutual effort and good will, more satisfactorily than in any other part of India. We were surprised to observe that the Vice-President of the Council was an Indian lady, Mrs. Muthulakshmi Reddi, who afterwards rendered assistance to the Commission on our Education sub-committee.

The more experienced we became of the general situation in India, the more we realized how much the Government's troubles were to be traced to the vernacular Press. The great majority of newspapers that circulate

to any appreciable extent amongst the masses are against the Government and there appears to be no effectual propaganda conducted by Government in reply to its detractors. Anything more scurrilous or more mendacious than the local Press on the subject of the Commission it would be difficult to conceive. The fact that the Government of India was up to this time for most purposes of the nature of an all-powerful bureaucracy and that in the meanwhile the Press is allowed the freedom associated with undiluted democracy, laid it open to a form of attack which under such anomalous circumstances it was powerless to control.

After a gargantuan feast provided for us by the British Madras Club we left for Tanjore at a late hour of the night. Unfortunately the hottest part of India is served only by a narrow-gauge railway. We had abandoned therefore our special train and we were accommodated in small compartments which, as we travelled south, assumed a tropical atmosphere. When we awoke on the following morning we were passing through a tract of country which, although remarkably green and alluvial, was hot and damp. On arrival at our destination in the course of the morning, our train was run into a siding under a canopy

constructed of bamboo and straw matting which kept our carriages cool most effectively. Our hosts had laid out an improvised garden by the side of the station, a favourite compliment in India for the honoured guest. A *shamiana* had been erected for the purpose of our reception of Deputations, which we interviewed most of the day. We spent a very airless and sleepless night in the train. Mosquito curtain hanging in stifling festoons round the victim in a diminutive railway carriage hardly acts as a soporific.

On the following morning we motored out into the country to partake of the hospitality of the Rajah of Pundi, a man of great possessions. Being thoroughly loyal to the British raj he had given the word that if any of his dependents waved a black flag he would be visited with the direst penalties which it was within his power to inflict. His house where he entertained us on a lavish scale was of the bungalow type. The while we stayed there his people seemed to have the free run of the whole demesne. He was accessible to all and sundry and was evidently the father and mother of his dependents. This unusual experience of ours was a glimpse of that feudal India which still persists apparently to the welfare of all concerned.

On returning to Tanjore we visited the famous Temple. I must confess to an unconquerable antipathy for these masterpieces of Hindu sacred architecture. This much-vaunted example is sombre and grotesque and contains much that is abhorrent to Western culture. The precincts seemed to be derelict and deserted. How far Christian and Hindu religious predilections are apart can be estimated by the fact that when a recent law was passed for the more effective suppression of indecent pictures and publications, the Temples had necessarily to be exempted from its provisions. The custodian of the Temple at Tanjore seemed to take a pride in the fact that there were seventy representations of the phallic emblem within the precincts. It is a fact that nearly all the large temples of the South of India have their complement of dancing-girls. At this point at least Western and Eastern ideas are, and always will be, wholly incompatible.

On the evening of the 4th March we proceeded on our way to Madura, spending on the way a burning night in the train. At Madura we found, as elsewhere, crowds in the streets. Our reception on this occasion was somewhat hostile. We motored to the Collector's Office, an imposing stone building

outside the town, where we interviewed a number of persons of consequence connected with local government. Considerable emphasis was laid by some of our Indian informants upon the universal bribery and corruption which was seriously prejudicing the proper conduct of the administration in this part of India. I was told, with how much truth I cannot estimate, that bribery is here so rife that there had been cases of school children being constrained to bribe their teachers in order to pass into a higher form. It is difficult to believe that corruption could go any further. We also attended as spectators a meeting of the District Board, and in the afternoon a sitting of the Municipal Council in the town itself.

On the same day an influential entertainment committee provided for us a wonderful garden party in the grounds of the old Fort, which at least a thousand persons of all sorts and descriptions attended. In the course of the entertainment I became aware of a quaint procession entering the garden, headed by retainers carrying many-coloured umbrellas and leading a gaily bedecked elephant. In the centre of the party two men carried a palanquin in which was seated one who, I was subsequently informed, was the Here-

ditary High Priest of the famous Madura Temple. It soon transpired he was seeking out Sir John Simon, not, as we were to discover the next day when he invited us to his house, with any idea of contributing to the solution of the problem with which we were in India to deal, but in order that we should assist him to be reinstated as the Trustee and Guardian of the Temple, a post of which for some reason he had been deprived. He and many others had conceived an exaggerated idea of our terms of reference.

In the evening we attended a memorable dinner-party given by a notable in a huge *shamiana* opposite the imposing sacred tank —one of the features of the town, the water of which reflected the flickering light of thousands of little oil lamps—the general effect being fairy-like. A vast concourse of townsfolk was collected in the streets, sitting on their haunches immobile in picturesque confusion. It was a very hot night, and after the festivities were concluded we were indeed glad to be offered the hospitality of a bungalow belonging to one of the members of the British community situated outside the town as a substitute for a night in our stationary train, which had become heated to the pitch of a furnace. We slept out on the

veranda, always a delicious experience in India.

We made an early start on the following morning, 6th March, the whole party meeting at an appointed cross-roads some way outside the town, our object being to visit the country of the Kallar tribe, who inhabit a district about 30 miles west of Madura. Some time back in history this tribe lived by cattle-lifting and other crimes, but ten years ago the Madras Government took them in hand, gave them schools, hospitals and other institutions associated with civilization, an effort which has proved well justified. The Kallars have answered to treatment admirably, and furnish a remarkable instance of what can be done with such unpromising material.

Our objective was the town of Yusilampati, which constitutes their headquarters for administrative purposes. We passed through numerous Kallar villages on the way—in each had been erected a triumphal arch under which our cars halted and where we were surrounded by over-friendly natives, who greeted us with acclamation and smothered us with fragrant flowers. Rarely had we met with such enthusiasm. Always sceptical of any true significance attaching to either the

hostile or friendly attitude of the crowds that lined our route, I inquired what was the origin of this good humour of a people that surely could not have appreciated, even if they had been informed thereof, the true bearing of our mission. It appears that rumour had been given wings throughout the district that owing to our advent amongst them their next crop would be a bumper one and that all their children born in the course of the following year would be males. I could only hope that their fields and their wives fulfilled these extravagant expectations.

When we arrived at Yusilampati we were conducted to the inevitable *shamiana*, where we received addresses. All round us, squatting on the soil, sat hundreds of the Kallar tribe—magnificent men. I have rarely seen such physique in any human beings. The fact that there is no child marriage in this tribe may adequately account for their healthy appearance. A ribald story is current that no Kallar youth, in former days, was allowed to marry until he had scored up an appreciable number of crimes, the resulting postponement of the marriage state to an appropriate age reacting favourably upon the race.

On returning to Madura we were shown all that the town has to offer to the tourist in

the way of sight-seeing except the one object of interest which most tourists make a pilgrimage hither to visit—the Great Temple. The Swarajists had forestalled us in this ambition by a knavish trick. They had prevailed upon the custodians to insist that we should take our shoes off on entering the sacred precincts. Fortunately we were informed in good time that not even the ordinary American tourist is required to do so, and that it had been arranged that a huge crowd should witness what it was hoped would be our humiliation. We deprived them of that satisfaction by cancelling our visit altogether. That same evening we left Madura, having a most friendly send-off from a large concourse of well-wishers on the platform. Our tour was not proceeding entirely in the manner which the Swarajists had hoped for.

CHAPTER IV

WE were now bound for Lahore on a devastating journey of four days and four nights in the train, almost could one say from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas.

On the morning of 7th March we arrived at Arkonam, where, much to our relief, we changed out of the narrow-gauge train into our special, which we discovered waiting for us there. The first part of our journey was oppressively hot and dreary. We found our faculties of mind and body jaded by the intolerable monotony of this expedition. The store of heat constantly accumulating in the railway carriages produced a languor inimical to mental effort of any kind. The lack of anything to observe, our total disinclination for study, the fierce glare through the windows, the sounds ever associated with the protracted halts in and between stations—the whir of the electric fan, the shrill noise of the grasshoppers, the croaking of frogs—all inclined us to an endorsement of Dr. Johnson's verdict that journeys are useless

labours which neither impregnate the imagination nor inform the understanding.

On the last day of this fearsome trek we seemed to run into a cooler and more invigorating atmosphere which betokened that we were over the Punjab border, and by the afternoon we at length reached our destination. The chronicles of our arrivals and leave-takings have no doubt already palled upon the reader, and I have some compunction in inflicting him with any further such, but our welcome at Lahore cannot be left unrecorded. It was a never-to-be-forgotten episode in the career of the Commission, far exceeding anything we had previously experienced. On the platform were ranged up in an extended line two hundred representative leading men of the Province. The ceremony of shaking hands alone occupied half an hour. Even the Swaraj Press had for once to admit the true facts and to acknowledge the actual nature of this astounding welcome. It was gratifying to the extent of embarrassment and caused us to reflect that very much might be expected of us in return. An innumerable concourse of townsfolk had assembled outside the station to accentuate the welcome which we had already received from the officials and members of the Legis-

lature. Unfortunately, some eight hundred of the malcontents had inserted themselves in the crowd, and had it not been for the protection of the police, who shepherded them out of the town, they might have experienced a very rough handling from our friends.

The members of the Commission were accommodated and entertained in the hospitable homes of various kind hosts. It fell to my agreeable lot to be the guest of Malik Feroze Khan Noon, one of the Ministers of the Punjab.

On the day of our arrival we attended a large garden party given in our honour, where we had the privilege of meeting for the first time Sir Malcolm Hailey, one of the most distinguished of all Indian administrators, and at the time of our visit Governor of the Punjab, who in that capacity and afterwards as Governor of the United Provinces was to offer us such invaluable assistance and advice.

On the following day, 11th March, we congregated at Government House, where I had stayed with Sir Michael O'Dwyer some years before. Sir Malcolm Hailey and his executive met the Commission in conference and we discussed the identical subjects we had

raised with the executives of the two Presidencies.

During our short stay in Lahore we witnessed a meeting of the Punjab Legislative Council at the invitation of its President. We were entertained by the Chief Justice, Sir Chandra Lal, another *alumnus* of Balliol. We received various deputations, including one from the Martial Races of the Punjab, imposing and picturesque figures in full uniform, bedizened with medals of numerous campaigns won in defence of their motherland. Every night we attended large dinner-parties and other convivialities provided for us by Ministers both British and Indian.

On 15th March the Commission split up into two parties in order to become the better acquainted with typical country districts in different parts of the Province. Sir John Simon, Colonel Lane Fox and Lord Strathcona went to the Lyalpur District. Lord Burnham, Major Attlee and I went to the Ferozepore District. Our party motored to Ferozepore in the morning, a distance of about 40 miles. On the way we paused to inspect the Great Barrage. Irrigation works in India are most impressive. They have a romance all their own. That the vast cataracts released from the melting snows of the

Himalayas which otherwise would whirl their way uselessly down to the sea, have been successfully harnessed and made to deflect their life-giving waters on one side or the other and to bring prosperity to countless thousands of those who, before such a purpose was achieved, eked out a bare existence or suffered actual starvation, is the highest tribute to the ingenuity and perseverance of the British raj and the most cogent refutation of those who disparage its beneficence.

Here at the Barrage we were greeted and shepherded by the District Commissioner, one Conolly, another living proof that Balliol College is the main source of supply for the personnel of the All India Services. We spent the afternoon engaged with interviews in the Commissioner's bungalow and subsequently attended the inevitable garden party.

On the afternoon of 16th March we left for Moga, a town some 40 or 50 miles distant. It was suggested that we should visit a certain village which was supposed to be more or less in the line of our route. It turned out that it was 16 miles out of our way. No one in India ever seems to have any idea of time or space. There was nothing to see when we arrived there except a large school devoid of any special interest to us. At Moga

we lunched with the American Mission, which is doing most valuable work amongst the young men of the place. We visited here, as we always did wherever we bent our steps, all those institutions, schools, hospitals, etc., which come within the sphere of influence of what we call in England local government, and what in India is designated local self-government. When we had thought the day's work was complete the Commissioner suggested we should still persevere and visit another village, Chandra by name, which on inquiries turned out to be 17 miles away. It was already about five o'clock, but I was glad to have made the extra effort, as it proved to be a model of what an Indian village can aspire to under a progressive and enlightened administration. The rest of our time at Ferozepore was spent in visiting District Councils, schools, jails, and other features of local government.

On 18th March we left Ferozepore for Gurdaspur, a distance of 120 miles. To avoid hostile demonstrations which were, as usual, anticipated, elaborate police arrangements had been made all along our route, but the trouble of taking these precautions might have been spared, as it was not the route we employed. When we started on our journey we were pre-

ceded by a police inspector on a motor-cycle who told us he would hand us over to the guidance of another police inspector at the Barrage. On arrival there he dismounted, saluted smartly, but quite forgot to put us in touch with the inspector who was to have acted as guide for the rest of the way. Our chauffeur in the meantime, who had, we discovered, been given no instructions, after the fashion of chauffeurs who do not know the way, followed his nose with an air of complete self-confidence. We had been going for a long distance when of a sudden I caught sight of a milestone with the instruction "Lahore 10 miles." As the strictest orders had been issued by the police that under no circumstances were we to go via Lahore and Amritsar we were somewhat puzzled. The chauffeur told us it was the only way he knew, so we had to chance it, skirting Amritsar, where trouble for us was expected. When we at last arrived at Gurdaspur about three hours after scheduled time, we were told that the police stationed along the correct route had been wiring in every direction to discover what had befallen the errant members of the Commission.

It was a wonderful scene that greeted us at our destination. A confused impression

of triumphal arches, children singing, garlands, Punjabis in every kind of uniform lining the road in thousands, dwells in my memory. As usual, detonators which have a painfully faithful resemblance to Mills bombs were let off as a token of goodwill by the crowd—a disconcerting custom. In this connection I call to mind that on one occasion in Lahore when driving behind Sir John Simon's car in a very narrow street I heard and saw a terrific explosion in the gutter as he passed. A huge cloud of smoke and dust arose and I thought for a moment our Chairman had gone up with it, but it turned out to be merely the customary *feu de joie.*

The Commissioner, Mr. Lane Roberts, introduced us to an endless queue of officials, and then motored us to his very well-appointed bungalow. In the evening there was a remarkable party given for us in what is known as the " Company Garden " in a very lovely setting from where could be distinctly seen the vast snow-clad peaks of the Himalayas rising one above another in their tranquil majesty.

Gurdaspur has a very great natural charm. The countryside is green and smiling. The people are amiable and responsive. The Pun-

jabi possesses entirely different characteristics, moral and physical, to the inhabitants of any other part of India. Whether it is the influence of the invigorating climate or the healthier standards of living to which they conform, their physique outstands among the different races of the sub-continent. Steadfast in loyalty to the British raj for the most part, they can on occasions be equally consistent in passion and in prejudice, but to myself the Punjabi, whatever his attitude, will always make an irresistible appeal.

During our sojourn in Lahore our customary day's touring was too strenuous and exacting to be altogether congenial, but we had at least one enchanting experience. Mr. Lane Roberts took us a long motor drive to the foot of the Himalayas to a place called Madhopur. Almost the whole distance our route lay along a magnificent canal, one of the waterways that bring life-giving properties to arid wilderness; shaded by rows of spreading trees on either side. The weather was absolutely idyllic. The climate of the Punjab in the cold weather is not the least enviable asset of this attractive province. The noise of running waters, so intensely refreshing to body and soul in a thirsty land, was ever in our ears as we sped upon our

way. At frequent intervals foaming cataracts interrupted the even flow of the limpid stream. Every four or five miles huge welcoming crowds awaited us with the usual compliments. There were no black flags to be seen anywhere. At Madhopur we inspected the extensive irrigation works on the Ravi River, which here takes a great sweep in its course. In the far distance we could see this mighty torrent emerging from the foothills of the Himalayas, beyond which rose tier upon tier of stupendous snow-clad peaks bathed in magic light. Across the river is Jummu—actually Kashmir territory—with its low wooded hills. A delightful drive back in the cool of the evening brought to an end an exceptionally pleasing excursion.

Before leaving Gurdaspur we had an opportunity of inquiring into the excellent working of the co-operative system, interviewing village representatives of this beneficent enterprise at an appointed place out in the country. For this purpose we held a sort of rustic durbar surrounded by a large congregation of villagers. The Secretary explained the whole movement to us and then, incongruously enough, conjurers and performing bears were produced for our edification. In India there is no sense of the inappropriate.

On 21st March we returned to Lahore, staying at Government House with Sir Malcolm Hailey. On the way to Delhi I visited Dehra Dun to see the Forestry Institute and the military college, reaching the capital again on 25th March.

The monotonous chronicles of our departures and arrivals, of our visits of inspection in town and country which I have attempted to record can convey but an inadequate impression of the vast amount of essential labour undertaken by the Commission in its initial tour of the Provinces, and the heavy physical strain imposed thereby. When I sometimes now reflect disconsolately upon the ultimate treatment meted out to our report there comes to me the recollection of those strenuous days, the necessary preliminaries to its compilation and their concomitants—our protracted sessions, ceaseless conferences, manœuvring with our opponents, perpetual night journeyings in trying atmosphere, tours of inspection, ceremonies and the like—all culminating in disillusionment.

We were met at Delhi Station by one of the Viceroy's A.D.C.s and proceeded to the Viceregal Lodge. The whole situation seemed to have undergone a favourable change. The

political temperature was nearer normal. The barometer was set fair. The tide seemed to be turning in our favour. It was by now obvious that the Swarajist Party in the Assembly had been very much impressed with the conspicuous and unexpected success of our first tour of the Provinces. They were in a chastened humour and had become almost obsequious. Mr. Jayakar and others were soliciting interviews with Sir John Simon, but for my own part I felt somewhat sceptical of this sudden *volte-face* on the part of our erstwhile foes. They affected ostensibly to be making approaches to us, but it seemed more than likely that their genuine intention was either to discover what further concessions could be exacted from us or merely to obtain information as scouts reconnoitring in the enemy's country.

The Viceroy was very complimentary about our efforts. He spoke to me of the striking change which had come over the situation, and expressed a hope that we might yet induce some of the malcontents to abandon their hostile attitude. I observed in my reply that the Swarajists must have strong digestions if they were now able to eat all the words they had previously spoken, even although nothing in India is more remarkable

than the nimble manner in which a politician will indulge in a *volte-face* without any sense of shame or without any explanation being considered called for.

Most surprising of all, at the invitation of the President himself, Mr. Patel, we were asked to visit the Assembly and to watch the proceedings from his private gallery—a compliment he certainly would not have paid us during our previous visit. He followed up this gesture with an invitation to his own house, where he entertained us in the most amicable fashion, making full atonement for any discourtesy he had displayed towards us in the first instance.

The point had now been reached when we hoped to be apprised of the decisions made by the Central and Provincial Legislatures as to their willingness to co-operate with the Commission. Sir John Simon was very naturally anxious to do all he could to bridge over any gap that separated us from those who had hitherto proved content to remain inaccessible. At one time he was so anxious to enlist as many Leaders of the Assembly as possible in our favour that he was canvassing the advisability of a suggestion being made to His Majesty that the Indian Wing might be appointed by royal warrant—but

there were insuperable objections to this course. It would have been fatal had we given way one inch now that matters were moving so much in our favour. At a large luncheon party given to the Commission in Delhi on 27th March, Sir John delivered a speech in which, much to my relief, he made it quite clear that the Commission stood by the terms of its original letter, published when we first arrived in India, and that we had no intention of bargaining with the non-co-operators any further. This decision of his had evidently been arrived at as a result of his recent conversations with the Swarajist leaders, who, he informed me, had made it clear to him that their attitude was dictated by considerations of status and that mainly on this account they asked for wider concessions from us. It was quite obvious that any further alteration of status and procedure could only be settled by the British Parliament, which showed no inclination to open up the subject again. The Swarajist Party had done nothing to deserve favours or concessions from the Commission. There was no obligation upon us to extricate them from their difficulties. The better acquainted I became with the whole situation, the more I was convinced that we could fare better

without their very unreliable co-operation. Above all, at this point some display of firmness on our part was essential.

In other directions developments were not so favourable as we had anticipated. Disappointing news arrived from Bengal, where the Council was to have voted a resolution inviting co-operation with the Commission, but for some trivial reason the vote had been postponed until the August session. Had it been passed it would have been gratifying to show our Government at home that in addition to the approbation of the Punjab, Burma, Bihar and Assam, we could also count on Bengal. The cumulative effect of such a sequence of successes would have produced striking results upon public opinion. The Viceroy tried to comfort us by commenting that if we were as familiar with political India as he was himself we should realize that nothing ever happens in India in accordance with expectation. We had to accept the facts as they were with what serenity we could.

On 28th March we held a farewell conference with the Viceroy and his executive, in the course of which Sir John Simon urged that the Government of India itself should express some views and make some tenta-

tive suggestions to work upon, a course it seemed reluctant to pursue. Other matters which came up for our discussion were the formation of a sub-committee to deal with education and also arrangements for our tour of the Provinces in the following winter. The Viceroy then, as always, was admirably helpful to us. Lord Goschen joined us on this occasion at the Viceregal Lodge bringing the welcome news that the Madras Council could be relied upon to pass a vote of co-operation with us if we gave them time.

On the eve of our departure I had a further conversation with the Viceroy. His final words to me were: "Do tell Simon not to imagine that there will be a tearing raging campaign by the Swarajists as soon as his back is turned. Nobody does anything of this sort from April to August." His forecast certainly held good during the ensuing summer, but proved only too fallacious during subsequent years.

After paying our formal respects to Lord Irwin we left Delhi homeward bound on the evening of 30th March, feeling thoroughly grateful and relieved that our first tour had proved so successful within reasonable limits. We arrived at Ballards Quay Station on the following morning. We again visited Sir

Leslie Wilson at Government House, who supplied us with the gratifying intelligence that the Bombay Council would eventually pass a vote in our favour. We spent a few hours under his roof, in the course of which Sir John Simon discussed with the Commission broadcasting an "au revoir" message. At his request I spent some time and ingenuity composing this effusion, which, to my surprise, was accepted without the alteration of a comma.

At eleven-thirty we set out for the Quay. Characteristically enough, only half the motor-drivers had been given the right directions. No plans ever go right in India. We had been accorded the almost royal privilege of leaving by the so-called Gate of India, but only half the party went to the right venue in the first instance. Ultimately we all foregathered at the appointed time and place. There were no demonstrations anywhere. The huge square in front of the Gate of India was practically deserted. We were loaded with garlands and bouquets by a number of well-wishers who met us under the archway, and then descended the steps through an avenue of photographers to the launch. We swiftly glided over the dancing waters of the harbour to the *Mooltan*, heartily glad to be

homeward bound after the conclusion of the first phase of our duties.

Our return journey was pleasant and uneventful enough after the long spell of our onerous labours in India. At Marseilles we were met by the *Préfet* of the town with a message from the French Government asking if he could pay us any attention or be of any service. We took advantage of so generous an offer to the extent of asking whether the boat train could be stopped for us at Avignon, whither we arranged to precede it by motor and where we planned to spend the day, instead of at Marseilles, a request which was obligingly complied with. On arrival at Folkestone, being the busy season of the year we went through all the inevitable tribulation of the most inconvenient Custom house in the world and when, after hours of struggle, our ordeal was over, a polite English official suddenly appeared apparently from nowhere and informed us he had been sent down with authority to exempt us from the customs! Before we reached the London terminus our special saloons were detached and brought into the station opposite the royal waiting-room where Government officials, photographers, relatives and friends were assembled in overwhelming numbers. So far,

Authority seemed to have attached some importance to and treated with due deference the Royal Statutory Commission.

Soon after our arrival the Prime Minister gave an official dinner-party in our honour at Lancaster House to meet the Cabinet, distinguished Indians and the India Office—surely a unique compliment in the history of Royal Commissions. Speeches were made in a laudatory vein. There was no hint of any weakening of support by the Government.

We soon found that there was a considerable amount of work to do in connection with the Commission's task during the summer months that intervened between our first and second visits to India. It was necessary to survey the ground already won and to prepare for a further advance. Indian blue books of all sorts and kinds began again to pour in upon us and it was difficult to keep pace with this never-diminishing supply. The Commission met once or twice a week, generally in a committee-room of the House of Lords. We commenced by interviewing the permanent officials, but as we interrogated them exclusively on matters which are dealt with in most text-books, these particular sessions did not have any particular significance or prove

to be of any value. But there were several complications that had inevitably arisen which had to be discussed and disposed of, such, for instance, as the question raised in a telegram by the Government of the Punjab on behalf of the Punjab Wing which was to function in collaboration with the Commission, as to whether we intended to reserve to ourselves the right to hear any evidence *in camera* apart from our Indian colleagues. We had originally decided that we should do so. Sir John Simon read to us letters from the Viceroy and Sir Malcolm Hailey strongly recommending us to give way on this account, as unfortunately the Swaraj Press had got wind of the matter and intended to work it up as another excuse for Indian non-co-operation. While I perfectly appreciated the point that, if we gave way, not only would we be deprived of the opportunity of procuring certain evidence which might be valuable to us, but that after the manner of the East they would thereupon press for further concessions, yet on all the evidence it was obvious to me that the exigencies of the situation left us no alternative. As the Commission, however, was divided on the matter it was referred to Lord Birkenhead, who emphatically gave judgment in favour of the concession

being made. Accordingly we wired to the Punjab Government the decision, which all over India had a most favourable result and incidentally produced a very complimentary leading article in *The Times*.

During the course of our sessions in the House of Lords we had the privilege of interviewing various ex-Viceroys and Governors, not one of whom seemed anything but dubious with regard to a precipitate step in the direction of responsible government. All of them counselled retaining very clearly-defined safeguards in the event of provincial autonomy being granted. While it may be legitimate to argue that those who were responsible for the successful operation of the old systems of government may not necessarily be the best judges of how to frame the new, the consensus of opinion amongst them upon the main principles of the reforms was significant enough. Not a single witness who had taken personal part in the actual administration of our great dependency was suffering under any illusions, or spoke in anything but guarded language of the possibilities for the present of complete self-government in India.

During this summer we were fortunately spared any debate of importance upon Indian affairs, all parties being thoroughly agreed

that as the Royal Commission had been set up with the unanimous assent of both Houses, as little as possible should be said which might prejudice our work. This truce was admirably and loyally observed by all.

CHAPTER V

ON Thursday, 26th September, the Commission set out from London for its second visit to India, destined to be a far more arduous and difficult undertaking than that of our previous experience. When we reached Aden we found a communication from the Viceroy awaiting us which contained the intelligence that the Central Indian Committee, composed of members of both the Central Legislatures, had come into being and was prepared to sit and work with us. He commented favourably on its composition, although it was not quite the representative body we had anticipated when on our previous visit we put forward the plan of a "Joint Free Conference." During the period between our two visits to India the Council of State had elected three members of its body in pursuance of our invitation, but the Legislative Assembly, influenced by the Swarajist Party, had by a narrow margin failed to record a vote for co-operation. From the point of view of the Congress, as

the sequel proved, this inflexible attitude was obviously the most prudent they could have adopted. Not only were our opponents sagacious enough to realize that by avoiding compromise they were more likely to exact further concessions from the Home Government, but they also obviated the unpleasant necessity of revealing how much they were divided amongst themselves and how little they were capable of contributing any constructive ideas to the common stock. By merely obstructing they were in a much more favourable strategic position to keep their own party united. The subsequent capitulation of the Home Government in the face of this defiance proved how correct had been these assumptions.

There was nothing for it under such circumstances but that the Viceroy should nominate members from the Legislative Assembly, and for the Commission to accept the situation with as good a grace as it could. The full team consisted of Sir Sankaran Nair, Sir Hari Singh Gour, Sir Arthur Froom, Dr. Abdullah Suhrawardy, Sir Kikabai Premchand, Nawab Ali Khan, Sirdar Singh Uberoi, Sir Sulfikar Ali Khan, and Mr. Rajah.

By the time we reached India all the Provincial Legislatures except those of Burma

and the Central Provinces had appointed Committees to collaborate with us in Joint Conference. The Viceroy told us in his letter that for the moment what concerned the Central Committee more than anything else was its possible status in relation to our own, a matter which certainly called for the utmost degree of tact and discretion on our part.

The original arrangements decided upon for the Commission had been that, if we arrived in harbour on the night of 11th October, we should remain on board until the following morning and then proceed to Poona. About midnight on the 10th a marconigram reached us with the unaccountable instructions that the entire programme had been altered. We were now to disembark on the night of the 11th and proceed direct to our destination. Sir John Simon remonstrated, as it would be said, of course, that we were slinking on shore under cover of darkness, but Sir Leslie Wilson telegraphed in reply to our protests to say that these were the Viceroy's orders and could not be called in question. We afterwards discovered that the day before our arrival a terrific explosion had occurred in a train travelling between Delhi and Bombay, killing several

persons and wrecking one of the coaches. The origin of the disaster appears to have been that an emissary of the extremists had been a passenger by this train and that he had brought with him an infernal machine with the object, so I understood, of wrecking our special on its way to Poona. Owing to some carelessness on his part he was hoist with his own petard. From this time onwards the most extreme precautions were taken for our safety—although, beyond an attempt to derail our special in the Central Provinces, I never heard of any other effort of a like character while we were in India. Wherever we travelled by train police stood at intervals in sight of one another along the line by day, and men with torches by night. Not a soul unauthorized was allowed in the stations through which we passed. A pilot engine invariably preceded us and a powerful searchlight was affixed to our own engine. Whenever we went out to an evening function in any town there were two or three concentric circles of police drawn round the area we visited. No member of the Commission ever went on foot anywhere without a plain-clothes policeman immediately in attendance. If any of us were lodged with a private individual special guards were

mounted literally up against our bedroom doors. I suppose there was some dreary consolation for this well-intentioned persecution in the reflection that a definite value was being attached to our continued existence and that there was some useful purpose served in avoiding its curtailment, a novel sensation for at least one member of the Commission.

At about seven o'clock in the evening of 11th October we once again came in sight of Bombay. As I gazed on the view of the ghats spreading away into a remote and hazy distance I could not help speculating with some natural misgivings upon what trials and tribulations were in store for us beyond the ramparts of those hills.

The sunset was, as usual in Bombay's hot damp atmosphere, exquisite. We drew up alongside Ballards Pier at about nine o'clock, where we experienced an interminable wait, of which I believe the Commission was the innocent, its opponents the guilty, cause. The monotony was for myself pleasantly alleviated conversing with Lady Irwin, who had travelled back to India by the same boat. As soon as the gangway was set, a few Indian officials came on board to greet us, not a very impressive welcome back, it must

be confessed. At about midnight we boarded the special train, which then took us up the hills to Poona, where we arrived the next morning, 12th October. I woke at an early hour just as the sun was rising. A lovely scene presented itself—country not unlike the Berkshire downs, deliciously green and English-looking. As we neared Poona Station we observed in a field close to the bridge an imposing gathering of students with banners on which was inscribed, "Nothing short of independence." What could they mean by this truculent demand? Did they advocate independence at once, and if so were they prepared to improvise the defence of India in a night, to say nothing of solving all the other formidable problems incidental to independence? It was of course impossible to take seriously such vapourings from a miscellaneous crowd of boys egged on by a handful of incendiaries who have never vouchsafed any explanation as to what any of their parrot cries signify. I discovered afterwards that these deluded youths were not inhabitants of Poona at all, but had been sent up from Bombay by a train previous to ours in order to compose a stage crowd. The Swaraj Press made the most of this unedifying performance, especially in view of the fact

that our reception in Poona was quite exceptionally enthusiastic.

We were accommodated by various hospitable hosts in the neighbourhood of the town. I was lodged with Mr. Rieu, the Revenue Minister of the Government of Bombay, in a delightful bungalow set in a peaceful and luxuriant garden.

On 13th October we met our Indian colleagues in conference for the first time, both the Central Government Wing and the Bombay Presidency Wing. At eleven-thirty in the morning we assembled in our room at the Courts of Justice, Sir John Simon occupying an enormous presidential chair in the centre of a horse-shoe table, the rest grouped round him in a semicircle with desks in front of us, two of our number seated on his left, the remainder on his right. On the one side were seated the Presidency Wing, headed by Mr. Bhutto, their leader. The Central Government Wing occupied the opposite side of the room, altogether a formidable array of inquisitors. In front of us were placed chairs for the witnesses. Much the same arrangements obtained wherever we held our sessions.

Sir John Simon opened the proceedings by explaining our procedure both as to time,

subject and method of examining witnesses. He conducted these and similar inquiries with singular sagacity, discretion and imperturbability. As a result of his previous experience he had learnt exactly when and how to be firm, when and how to be lenient —very essential accomplishments in the predicament in which circumstances had placed him, while he created at once an altogether favourable atmosphere and successfully established the essential condition of a mutual confidence between Indians and British.

It is obviously not my intention to record in detail the protracted proceedings of seventy-five sessions of the Commission in the nine different Provinces, all of which seemed to bear a wearisome similarity one to the other. Official shorthand writers have made a record of all our proceedings, which were subsequently embalmed and I hope buried for ever in vast tomes accessible to all, but attractive I should imagine to none, at a cost which doubtless accounts for a quite appreciable amount of the £200,000 contributed by the taxpayer, who, particularly in the light of subsequent history, must contemplate with resentment so futile an extravagance. My object is rather to furnish the reader with some account of the circumstances in which

we extracted the information and the difficulties we encountered in the process.

The collaboration with us of the Central and the Provincial Wings, which was the direct outcome of our own suggestion, made on our first arrival to the Viceroy, while, under the circumstances it probably saved the whole situation, was not without its disadvantages. It is no disparagement of their abilities or of their competence to assist us when it is alleged that their constant presence at our elbow rendered the procedure overloaded and cumbersome. There can be no doubt that we could have accomplished our task in a fraction of the time, probably with infinitely more satisfactory results, had the original procedure been carried out in accordance with the intention of the Imperial Parliament.

My general impression was that the same problems confronted us in every province. In fact, by the time that we had gone halfway through our programme, every subject had been worn threadbare and we knew by heart the answers to the questions which we addressed to the witnesses. Moreover, the answers to the great majority of questions that were asked had already been supplied to us in the voluminous memoranda which

it was our fate to study. We had previously invited the submission of information both from official and non-official sources. We had received from the Government of India and also from officials of the India Office all the descriptive and explanatory matter which could have any bearing upon the subjects of our investigation. Each Provincial Government had supplied us with exhaustive and detailed criticisms on the working of the reforms with the one exception of the Central Provinces, from which quarter we never anticipated any assistance, completely devoid of any constructive ability as the political leaders of that Province were at the time of our visit. A vast accumulation of documents from every conceivable source, valuable and the reverse, poured upon us in a torrential cataract all day and every day. With such an amount of material at our command, after we had held a certain number of sessions, it taxed even Sir John Simon's ingenuity and resource to break any fresh ground.

At Poonã we had the opportunity of judging how far the procedure which we had adopted under the force of adverse circumstances was calculated to work to our advantage. Now and hereafter I could not but feel that, had we been able to conduct these sessions on

our own account, had they been held *in camera*, consulting only those who were qualified to advise, we should not only have been able to accomplish our task much more expeditiously but we should have obtained information that would have made our report the more valuable, based as it would have been, not on what the Indians would have wished the facts to be, not upon misrepresentations ignorant or intentional, but upon inexorable realities. It was too much to anticipate that Indians, occupying official positions, should commit themselves, in the full glare of publicity, with a Press nine-tenths bitterly hostile to the British raj recording and broadcasting their every uttered word, to views and opinions which might have adversely influenced the whole course of their careers. It was obviously impossible, for instance, for them to give their real views on the subject of Indianisation of the Services, not the least important subject of our investigation. It was mere waste of time on our part asking questions in such a connection.

I recall that, on one occasion after an official dinner-party in Delhi, one of the most distinguished Indians, holding high office in the Government of India, in the course of conversation told me that he had been obliged

to refuse the invitation of the Commission to give evidence on the grounds that whatever he said would be published throughout the length and breadth of the land even if our sitting was potentially held *in camera*. I made so bold as to inquire of him what particular subject he would find it impossible to address himself to with any degree of candour. His reply was to the effect that he viewed the rapid Indianisation of the Services with considerable misgiving. But no evidence that was ever given to us in public on that subject by any of his countrymen was to the same effect. On another occasion a Minister in one of the Provinces expressed an entirely different view on the subject of the transference of law and order to what he had imparted to us at an open session of the Joint Conference. It is unnecessary perhaps to enlarge any further on what is painfully obvious. It is true that we went through the farce of hearing some important witnesses *in camera*, but all the "*in camera*" evidence appeared in the Indian papers, and incidentally the confidential memoranda supplied by the various Provincial Governments were made public property before we were privileged to receive them.

On the whole our sessions in Poona went remarkably smoothly, and, with the reservation I have already made, they were in most respects of considerable value to the Commission, but we discovered early in our career that Hindu-Moslem rivalry was inextricably woven into the texture of the social, political and economic life of the nation, prejudicing and compromising our already complex task at every turn.

The controversy mainly concerned us in that we were called upon to exercise our ingenuity in suggesting some alternative to a universal system of joint electorates which, although strenuously advocated by the Hindus, was with an equal degree of emphasis and unanimity rejected by all the minority communities combined. Although Indians profess themselves so solicitous to emulate exclusively British political institutions, nevertheless our system of general electorates seems to find no favour under existing circumstances with approximately one-half of the politically conscious Indians.

There appeared to us to be two alternatives to the system of general electorates, one or other of which might be adopted to safeguard the interests of the Moslems—the system of separate electorates, that is to say, of con-

stituencies wherein Moslems alone voted for a Moslem candidate, or the system of the reservation of seats, that is to say, of constituencies wherein a certain number of seats were reserved for Moslems irrespective of whether members of another community stood at the head of the poll for those seats which were reserved.

When the Hindus realized that it was impossible to force the system of general electorates upon the minor communities, they decided that the lesser evil of the two alternatives was the system of the reservation of seats, the ostensible reason which they adduced for this selection being that the system of separate electorates was undemocratic. By what subtle process of reasoning the system of the reservation of seats could be deemed more democratic than that of separate electorates it is not easy to determine. But the mind of the Hindu intelligentsia works mysteriously.

The Moslems whispered in our ears behind closed doors that the Hindu predilection for the reservation of seats was in no way concerned with any reverence for democracy, but was to be accounted for by the fact that under such a system the Hindus would secure that only that type of Moslem whom they

could suborn and control would be elected. By the same token they themselves gave preference to separate electorates, as under that system they would be able to secure the election of those candidates who would be truly representative of their community and all that their community stood for.

Although our sessions to examine witnesses constituted the main objective of our second tour, these duties were alternated with visits of inspection to every conceivable institution in town and country after the fashion of our procedure on the first. Both the midday and the evening meal generally partook of the nature of a public function either at Government House or at the hospitable table of Indian Ministers and officials. The days were passed thus in occupations, many that were pleasant, many that were uncongenial, nearly all that were exhausting. What few moments remained to us were generally employed in private conference either amongst ourselves or in taking counsel with the Governors and members of their executives. Under such exacting circumstances it was very difficult to improvise any opportunity for fresh air and exercise in order to maintain a normal standard of health.

At Poona I visited the Reformatory at

Jeravda, of which the powers that be are inordinately proud. I was slightly disappointed, but it is on the whole efficiently run, somewhat on Borstal lines. Indians hold it in high esteem, so much so that one man asked if his son might be educated there, and on being refused prosecuted him for theft in order to achieve his ambition. I saw the very boy, whose character was so exemplary that he had been made a monitor, and he told us without any embarrassment he had taken ten rupees off his father, with what venial purpose it was sufficiently obvious.

The Commission were present at the opening of the Lloyd Dam by the Governor, Sir Leslie Wilson. Mr. Rieu took us in his car to the spot—a lovely drive of about 30 miles up into the ghats—a smiling country at this time of year, the flowering trees a remarkable feature of the landscape. Our route lay over a high pass from the top of which the views are overwhelming. The dam, a most impressive pile of masonry, is the largest in the world. We waited a long while for the Governor, and when he arrived we were treated to the usual interminable speeches so dear both to British officialdom and Indians of any status. We subsequently motored along the dam—on one side an entrancing

view of the surrounding country and on the other the colossal artificial lake, blue and shimmering in the sun, and beyond the ghats forming a very fine rugged horizon. We were given refreshment at an attractive bungalow on the shore of the lake, then we proceeded to view the gigantic wall of the dam from below before returning home along the main road. This proved to be the most perilous drive after the evening shadows had closed in, as the dust of the cars ahead rendered it impossible to see the stray human beings, bullock-carts, etc., that wander about so casually on Indian roads. But it was enjoyable enough, enhanced by the crimson light of the evening sun setting beneath hills of azure and amethyst. The road leads most of the way under trees, which are infested with flying foxes hanging like unwholesome fruit from the boughs—disgusting creatures that flopped away into the moonlight as our cars disturbed their rest. We passed through a tunnel at the summit of the ghats, and then down a very dangerous zigzag path back to Poona.

We held various conferences with the Government and other officials at Ganeshkind, the hideous Government House, pleasantly situated on the outskirts of the town.

We gathered from the official English side the views that at present in Bombay there was opposition to complete Provincial autonomy, that it would not be possible for a long while to transfer " law and order " in virtue of our inevitable responsibility to protect the vast ignorant millions at present loyal to us, that the communal trouble was the chief stumbling-block to all reforms (information which it was hardly necessary to impart to us) that dyarchy would work well in the Bombay Presidency if the financial situation was easier, that corruption was rife everywhere, that India requires stability—the fact that Indians knew the reforms were to be reviewed in ten years was prejudicial to their smooth working in the first reformed period —and that in the districts the people favour Europeans as Collectors. I discussed this comprehensive diagnosis privately with one of the Ministry, inquiring of him whether, supposing we decided for the present it was not advisable to grant any appreciable measure of reforms, the Swarajists would be able to make the situation quite impossible. He replied that during the combined Khilafat-Swaraj agitation in the year 1921 we had, broadly speaking, the whole of India against us and yet we weathered the storm. If we

refused any further advance in self-government we should at least have the Moslems with us. I could not myself feel positive, in view of the altered circumstances, that his conclusions were justified by such historical analogies.

On the 28th October we left Poona, a protracted stifling journey to Lahore relieved of its monotony only by the lovely Bhopal jungle, blazing with the loveliest of all flowering trees, the "flame of the forest." On 30th October we arrived at our destination, only a few people to meet us on the platform. The Reception Committee hoped we would regard the previous welcome given to us here (which as I have already explained was truly magnificent) once and for all as our official reception. The streets were absolutely deserted. The police had bottled up the Swarajists, headed by Lala Lajput Rai who had been ill-advised enough to take part in such a demonstration, behind barbed-wire entanglements. There was some fear that there might be a bomb outrage perpetrated on this occasion, as there are ugly characters habitually in Lahore who can easily be enlisted with such a purpose for the usual consideration. Lajput Rai incontinently endeavoured to break through the

police cordon and unfortunately received a blow from a *lathi* which, I believe with no justification, it was alleged was the cause of his death which took place a few days later. Malik Feroze Khan Noon, from whom once again I was delighted to find myself receiving the kindest of hospitality, greeted me on the platform and took me to his house, where he discussed the situation, which he said had much improved, and then took me for a long ride, refreshing enough after our intolerable journey.

On 31st October we held our first session in a hall which was normally used by railway officials. The whole neighbourhood seemed to be bristling with police, C.I.D. and detectives. I was told a thousand extra police had been drafted into the town for our benefit. The Punjab Committee seemed to be composed of men of robust intelligence, although they may have been lacking in the dialectic skill of the Bengali. We suffered from immensely long sittings—occasionally extending to seven hours in duration, which were interesting on the whole, but for the fact that there developed a deplorable tendency for everyone either to repeat questions already asked or to ask questions already answered in the memorandum. I found the

English witnesses fearless and candid in their replies, especially on the subject of corruption, which was evidently rife in the Indianised Services.

While in Lahore, Malik Feroze Khan Noon invited me to spend the week-end with him at his country residence, 120 miles distant, almost on the North-West Frontier Province border near Sharpur, called Nur-pur-Noon, and I was thus able to obtain a fugitive but delightful glimpse of the domestic country life of a patrician Indian family. The whole of this 120-miles journey assisted to confirm me in my preconceived view that one part of India is very like another in spite of its gigantic size and the variety of its climate, the only contrast in the desolate landscape being that some plains are more dusty than others, that some have even fewer trees than those you have previously seen. We only passed one town the whole way, dominated by a venerable Sikh fort. The country is intersected by numerous canals. The road was a good metalled one for the most part, but the last few miles of the journey were over a rough bad track. Arriving soon after sunset, we passed through a typical village and then into a wide compound where the house was situated, and where an arch of

banana-leaves had been erected by way of welcome. Immediately outside the house were assembled all my host's relatives, who live, patriarchal fashion, upon the estate, which consists of about 4,000 acres. We sat round conversing in a spacious sitting-room and then partook of an excellent meal of Indian dishes, which in this part of the world is to be infinitely preferred to the colourable imitation of English food so often given to the Englishman by way of compliment. On the following morning we rose before the sun and indulged in a morning's duck shoot at the nearest jhil. Then when the sun had risen we walked across the fields, accompanied by most of the retainers and inhabitants, to shoot partridges. We reached the house in time for breakfast, after which I retired to peruse the Punjab Government Memorandum, while the Malik with all his relations sat under a tree on the terrace hearing complaints and requests from his dependants. It was indeed refreshing in these very unfeudal days to witness anyone so much the father and mother of his people. The villagers were intensely interested in myself, as in these parts they very rarely see an Englishman. I noticed in a backyard a continual procession of women with graceful

carriage and figures bearing large bales of cotton on their heads, contributed, I was told, by the farmer in lieu of rent, which is here paid in kind. The *zeiss* brought all my host's horses into the garden for my inspection, of which he was justly proud and I envious. After lunch we again went out shooting until sunset. In the evening after dinner we sat in the sitting-room, where a villager with a strange-looking instrument in his hand, accompanied by two little boys, squatted on the floor, and played and sang to us. Then entered a party of men with tom-toms and stringed instruments who were, I was told, the musicians who habitually discourse music at marriage feasts. They were accompanied by another small boy who danced or rather moved in rhythmic time to the music and occasionally yawned, evidently not being accustomed to late hours. The singing to my Western ears was more wonderful than pleasant. But my criticism was balanced by the reflection of how painful our music would strike upon their ears. I believe they sang Indian love songs. They literally shrieked and yelled these primitive carols. The volume of sound was amazing. There never seems to be any reason why any Indian song should ever come to

an end unless, as was the case with our host, the audience shows some determination that a period should be set to its continuance.

On the Monday we again arose in the dark hours of the morning and took our departure. We allowed ourselves four hours to get back to Lahore, as I was anxious to attend the Conference which sat at eleven, but it was hardly a sufficient margin of time for the purpose, as practically on the whole way we encountered long caravans of Pathans with strings of camels coming down from the frontier into Lahore, which effectually retarded our progress. Magnificent and romantic-looking men and women, picturesquely attired but very dirty withal, they regularly come down into the plains during certain seasons of the year, build mud walls and work on the canals, at which accomplishments they are expert. In old days before the *Pax Britannica* their penetration was not so peaceful.

I was privileged to be afforded the opportunity of another introduction to Indian domestic circles in Lahore itself at the invitation of Sir Mohamed Shafi, the distinguished Moslem leader who represented his community at the Round Table Conference until

his regretted death in 1931. The experience was as unusual as it was agreeable in virtue of the fact that although few aristocratic Moslem ladies in the Punjab are out of purdah —in this household, where I was so cordially welcomed into the intimate family circle of Lady Shafi herself, the ladies have broken away from their traditional seclusion and, much to the surprise of their own country-women, have thrown off the trammels of custom and are now taking a leading part in the political and social life of India. In view of the historical origin of purdah it is incredible that such a custom should continue under modern conditions, not only to the detriment of the social amenities of India but to the welfare of the human race. Lady Shafi's daughter, the Begum Shah Nawaz, who was subsequently appointed a delegate at the Round Table Conference, a graceful and intellectual personality, was present that night at dinner together with other ladies of the family, all of whom were not only highly cultured but capable of placing their valuable personal influence at the service of the State. I firmly believe that if all ladies of their social rank and standing would emulate Lady Shafi and take up the cause of their lowlier sisters in India, we should witness a social

revolution in that country which would have its beneficial reactions in every home.

These episodes which abide so pleasantly in my recollection are only two of many that confirmed me in the view that there is much affinity between Indians and English, and that if only political differences could be composed, and if Indian ladies could take their rightful place in the fresh air of freedom, the two communities will have at least a basis of social intercourse upon which to build a more enduring mutual understanding, affection and sympathy.

On the last day of our visit to Lahore the Commission was granted an interview with the Governor, Sir Geoffrey de Montmorency. We discussed in his presence the fundamental issues which at the Joint Conference were all too frequently subordinated to meticulous detail. Of the problems which were now occupying our attention, one that in particular taxed our ingenuity was whether we were to suggest the same measure of reforms for all the provinces simultaneously. We unanimously came to the conclusion that it would not be possible to differentiate, although we were alive to the objection that if the weakest link was given the same pressure to bear as the strongest, the chain

might break. We had already decided against another Commission coming out to dig up the roots of the reforms to see how they were progressing. Therefore it obviously followed that the form of constitution that we must devise for the Provinces must be one capable of developing of its own volition. Granted that this solution was correct it was nevertheless to be apprehended that, since Indians are universally so confident of their ability to govern themselves, each province would at once evolve to the utmost limit within the terms of any amendment we might make to the Government of India Act, irrespective of actual conditions and capacities, a proceeding which would be disastrous in the case of a hopelessly backward province like the Central Provinces. But since to every decision we arrived at there was always some telling objection to be raised, it remained for us but to choose the lesser evil.

After a large dinner-party given in honour of the Commission by Shaubidin, President of the Punjab Legislative Council, we left for Karachi on the 9th November. We spent that night and part of the next day traversing the Sind Desert, always an unpleasant experience. It is not convenient to open the window at night during the train's

passage through this parched and arid wilderness, as more dust than air pours into the compartment—so the alternative is to lie awake groaning. On the afternoon of the 10th we came to a halt at Rohri, where we descended from our special and took motors to Sukkur, with the object of being shown the great barrage works on the Indus. Although I did not enjoy the experience owing to the intense heat and the excessive multitude of officials who accompanied us, nevertheless it helped to form some estimate of what these gigantic irrigation works mean in the matter of material wealth and health to the people of India.

The following night in the train was worse than its predecessor. I sat up until the early hours in the forlorn hope that the atmosphere would cool, but the temperature only seemed to become intensified. Having secured hardly any sleep for two nights I did not feel in a very optimistic mood when we detrained at Karachi. Here I was met by my host, Mr. Wild, the Judicial Commissioner, who motored me straightway to his magnificent house which was situated in a large and attractive garden. Imposing architecture seems to be a feature of this town.

We set off after breakfast to attend the

Armistice Day parade in front of the Frere Hall—which, like all military ceremonies in India, was most impressive. In the evening Sir John Simon held a conference with his colleagues at Government House. The Viceroy had written to inform us that the Government of India had come to the conclusion that it was not prepared to help us with any definite suggestions. It was to be presumed that the Viceroy could not have appreciated what an impossible position this unaccountable decision was calculated to create for us. We could not go back home without some enlightenment as to the views entertained by the Central Government. However consistent with tradition, it was manifestly unavailing on this occasion for Delhi to take up this detached attitude. The second matter we discussed related to the flagrant disclosures of our "*in camera*" evidence, which was now of daily occurrence in all the newspapers. It was difficult to know what action we could take to frustrate the perpetrators of these indiscretions, but it was obvious that if we did nothing by way of protest other provinces would take warning and we should obtain from them still less information of a genuine or valuable character.

The Commission was given a dinner to

meet the Sind officials in Government House, a charming old-fashioned residence built by Sir Charles Napier and now inhabited by the Commissioner in Sind—Mr. Hudson.

The succeeding days were spent in conference. We had come here ostensibly with the purpose of investigating the matter of the separation of Sind, but we hardly discussed anything save the communal question unless it was the problem of irrigation and the Indianisation of this particular service, the transference of which is looked upon with utmost misgivings by those now in control. The opportunities here for corruption are limitless. The distribution of water in a thirsty land most surely offers more temptation for those in control to place too broad an interpretation upon their trust, than any other function within the sphere of State Services.

We joined our special train in the evening of the 13th November at the Cantonment Station. On the following morning we entered a sandy desert not unlike the wildernesses of North Africa. We were now over the border into Baluchistan. Rugged hills began to appear on both sides and gradually we drew nearer to the Bolan Pass. At Sibi we descended on to the platform and found

there a most striking deputation of Baluchi tribal chieftains—about sixty in number—who seemed to have stepped out of another century. Some of them held steaming roast legs of mutton in either hand, others loaves of bread containing large hot stones to keep them warm. Two venerable heroes with henna-dyed beards told us they had known Lord Roberts well. After mutual compliments through the medium of an interpreter we re-embarked and proceeded into the Bolan Pass with one engine pulling in front and two pushing behind. From the plains up to the summit the ascent is between six and seven thousand feet. The precipitous causeway was wonderfully impressive, vast bare rocks of fantastic shape towering up on every side, tinted a deep rose colour by the rays of the setting sun—the air mysteriously limpid. At seven-thirty in the evening we reached Quetta, where we were met by the Agent to the Governor-General, Mr. St. John and his staff, who took us in consignments to their several houses, where we were heartily relieved to be able to gather round a fire as the atmosphere was perishingly cold. Quetta is 5,500 feet above sea-level. When we returned to our train for dinner we found that thoughtful officials had provided us with oil-

lamp stoves for our sleeping-compartments, without which we should have been frozen—the thermometer registering eight degrees of frost, a temperature which in contrast to the tropical heat of the Sind Desert seemed Arctic.

On the following morning, the 15th November, we looked out upon a white world, hoar-frost covering every detail of the landscape. After breakfast we started off with the Agent along a road which ran due north towards Kandahar. It was a glorious morning. The translucence of the atmosphere in Baluchistan is a natural phenomenon that surpasses anything of the kind I have seen elsewhere. It creates curious optical illusions, the hills in the background looking as clear and as close as those in the foreground, the general effect being that of theatre scenery rather than of anything in real life. Our whole route—a distance of some 80 miles—was faithfully guarded by friendly Baluchi tribal levies, like all mountain races robust picturesque figures to look upon. We saw many examples of the nomadic tribes who habitually lead a vagrant existence, grazing flocks in the wide open plains. Mr. Wingate, of the I.C.S., who was in my car, told me that they were conspicuously honest people,

the traders who supply to them the necessaries of existence allowing them with impunity any extent of credit, since they are always to be trusted to pay when, after months of wandering, they retrace their steps. We stopped at a wool-ginning factory, filthy and uninteresting. Eventually we reached a small township called Peshin, where we had the good fortune to be invited as spectators to witness a Jirgah, an assembly of tribal headmen who, under the ægis of British administration, discuss their own concerns and also try cases, both criminal and civil. Very little of Baluchistan is actually British territory. We lease some of it from the Khan of Kalat and we administer the country within certain limits. The main object of the Commission visiting Baluchistan was to discuss the possibility of the reforms being extended to any part of a country where the indigenous tribes seem perfectly content living in their own patriarchal way, under their own laws, oblivious of the march of events in neighbouring provinces. Ultimately the Commission decided to leave them to their own devices—an excellent solution.

At this particular Jirgah some fine-looking Baluchi headmen were trying a case of adultery. It appears that there is a con-

siderable shortage of women amongst them and it follows that adultery is a very common offence, too often followed by murder, which under these circumstances is considered comparatively venial. Adultery, at the same time, is held to be a grave offence against the tribe itself and therefore incurs proportionately heavy penalties. We were informed that in this case a fine of 1,500 rupees would be exacted. I asked how on earth could such a sum be paid by so indigent a people. The reply to my question was that as women are scarce they are proportionately valuable and each girl has a price as a potential bride. Therefore the tribe to which the adulterer belongs would be under an obligation to give 1,500 rupees' worth of girls in marriage to the offended tribe as a solatium.

We walked through the primitive bazaar of Peshin and then returned much the same way as we had come. We attended a large luncheon-party at the Agency—a number of ladies, wives of the soldiers and officials of this garrison town, being among the guests.

There was a garden party at the Agency in the evening for the Commission to meet some of the Baluchi chieftains. Before taking our departure we motored up to see the Staff College, which is very well appointed.

We found ourselves on the next morning, 17th November, at Rawal Pindi. Between here and Peshawar we passed through the most impressive country. One of the finest views in India is to be obtained from the great bridge over the Indus at Attock. We saw it under the best of circumstances in brilliant sunshine. Masses of troops, mule transport, and other evidences of life on the Frontier were winding their way along the roads below us. The hills surrounding the valley are stupendous, resembling appropriately enough the bastions and buttresses of a giant fortress.

At eleven-thirty we drew into Peshawar. To my surprise—as I thought we should be immune from anything of the sort on the Frontier—there was congregated on the maidan just below the fort one of the largest crowds of "black flaggers" I had yet seen. I was told afterwards that there was a considerable percentage of Khilafatists amongst them, instigators of a movement which, now that the Caliph had been made to abdicate without any protest from the faithful, I had thought to be virtually extinct. One of the demonstrators, who that same afternoon acted as golf caddy to a lady of our party, confessed that he had never heard of the Simon

Commission and that he was under the impression that he had been taking part in what he described as a "Hindu-Moslem tomasha."

All the authorities, headed by Sir Norman Bolton, the High Commissioner, were marshalled together on the platform to greet us. Mr. Fraser, the Judicial Commissioner, with whom I stayed, drove me up to his house, of the type of the usual charming bungalow always to be found in any British cantonment. In the evening we dined at Government House, everyone talking about the untimely death of Lala Lajput Rai, which was not calculated to make things easier for the Commission.

On the following morning, 18th November, we went up into the Khyber Pass, where we found a levy of Afridi tribesmen, who lined the whole route to Lundi Kotal in our honour. The railway had been built since I was last here, which innovation robs the place of whatever romance Cook's tourists have left to it and which seems to be strategically useless now that motor transport has become the recognized method in such country of keeping an army adequately supplied in food and munitions. We made our first halt at Shargai, a huge new fort about half-way to

Ali Musjid, where we sat for a while in the officers' mess drinking beer and coffee and then proceeded on our way. At Lundi Kotal we were met by various officials who accompanied us to a spot just above Lundi Khana. We were not allowed to descend to the frontier barrier as there was fighting in progress hard by at Dacca where the Afghans were showing their resentment in practical and forceful fashion of King Amanullah's reforms. This restriction was disappointing, but nevertheless we obtained from our point of vantage the most glorious view into Afghanistan, the Hindu Khoosh mountains covered with snow forming an appropriate background. After admiring our surroundings at leisure we returned to Lundi Kotal for lunch where—so typical of English adaptability in these wild outposts of Empire—a small gymkhana club has been improvised for the use of the garrison, with a tennis court and polo ground complete. In front of the main block of buildings were drawn up on one side the Kahsader or tribal levies and on the other a deputation of local chiefs who presented Sir John Simon with two sheep, presumably on the mutually satisfactory understanding that he would immediately return the same to their former owners.

After lunch we retraced our steps through the Khyber. At Jamrud Fort we were entertained sumptuously by the Afridi chieftains. Hundreds of these picturesque hill tribesmen of magnificent physique stood round, gave us tea in a spacious *shamiana* and engaged us affably in conversation. They had roasted a sheep whole and invited us to partake of it, a more attractive dish than what followed—a basin of these animals' eyes. On our way back to Peshawar we called at the Islamic College, a promising institution recently built and founded for the sons of the tribal chiefs, not unlike the Chiefs' College at Lahore in general purpose. I conversed with some of the lads, who seemed much like schoolboys in any other part of the world, although the environment in which they live doubtless differentiates them in certain respects. The headmaster told me that at the beginning of the term he asked one of the boys how he had spent his holidays. He replied: "I have been fighting." "Did you kill anyone?" was the next question. "I hope so," came the ready answer, "I am a good shot."

On 19th November our Joint Conference began its session, being located in the Museum buildings. The difficulty that faced us here was how to reconcile saving the *amour propre*

of the Pathans, who justifiably resent being meted out treatment diverse from the rest of India, and maintaining secure the absolute authority of the Central Government in all which concerns the defence of the North-West Frontier, and our ceaseless watch and ward upon the gateway of India. Leslie Stephen, in his *Playground of Europe*, comments on a trifling inequality in the earth's surface being the means of preserving relics of extinct modes of thought. Nowhere surely can natural features be held more responsible for retarding man's progress than along this great mountain barrier that separates India from the Asiatic continent.

We left Peshawar on 20th November and returned to Delhi, where we arrived on the following evening. At the station we found various members of the Government of India, all looking rather perturbed with what we discovered to be very sufficient reason, as, thanks to the dilatoriness or incompetence of the authorities, a vast and hostile crowd which had already broken through the police barriers had assembled along our route immediately outside the station. We drove away through avenues of angry men shouting insults at us. By good luck more than by good management no outrage occurred beyond a stone flung by

someone in the crowd striking Lady Froom on the head, fortunately with no serious consequences. It was small thanks to the arrangements made by responsible persons, and it was indeed a miracle that no really untoward incident occurred, as the crowd had been worked up into a very ugly mood. I had a long talk that evening with one of the authorities responsible for our safety who was thoroughly incensed with the attitude of his superiors. Orders had been issued that there was to be as little police control and unpleasantness as possible—as if such a crowd appreciated the significance of the Royal Commission and as if there was any other effectual method of dealing with such a demonstration than by employing to the full the instruments of law and order. He said it was outrageous to allow a motley rabble from the bazaars, ten thousand strong it was estimated, to collect, and that if only he had been given the proper orders he could have instead produced an equally large one friendly to us. He told me that when the Prince of Wales came to Delhi they drafted in a number of villagers to line the streets which were vacant, and that as soon as the Delhi natives realized they were under police protection they joined them and the Prince had a great

ovation. So much for this misdirected effort at placating an unsophisticated crowd. It is amazing how little some who have lived all their lives in India seem to learn about the denizens of the bazaars.

We at once resumed our deliberations in Delhi. A subject which was almost as persistently with us and fraught with as vital consequences as the Hindu-Moslem trouble, namely, the question of the transference of Law and Order, formed the main feature of our discussions. None of our tentative suggestions as to how this feat should be performed seemed to find favour with the Government of India at that time, in virtue of the apprehension that if any of these alternative suggestions were approved it would be impossible to carry on government at a crisis. On the other hand, if we decided not to transfer Law and Order, Indian opinion would have denounced the reforms comprehensively as a sham. This complete dilemma gave us furiously to think throughout the whole course of our sessions in the Provinces.

All the Swaraj Press was now ablaze with exhortations to the youth of India to avenge Lajput Rai's death, presumably on ourselves. Two or three ladies, Mrs. Besant and Mrs. Das in particular, seemed none too discriminating

in their language on the subject. One member of the Commission on reading these effusions in the Press quietly commented, "Charlotte Corday did her own dirty work herself."

I found that on our return to Delhi the whole attitude of Ministers and other authorities towards us had changed. Whereas on our first visit the official hierarchy seemed so very inaccessible, and we on our part seemed very much ignored—now the situation was entirely reversed. I found myself staying with the Home Member and having most interesting and informative discussions with him. After a number of valuable meetings of the Conference we left Delhi in the evening of 27th November.

CHAPTER VI

WE broke our journey at Agra, where the whole of our company, including secretariat and camp followers, were accommodated at the Circuit House. Some unlucky inspiration induced us to visit the Taj Mahal one night *en masse*, reinforced by a contingent of officials and their friends, a muster altogether too unwieldy and exuberant even for the least inspiring form of sight-seeing, with results that I not only anticipated but accepted with a certain measure of malicious satisfaction. To myself, who had seen the Taj aforetime under widely different circumstances, it appeared little short of wanton sacrilege that we should desecrate those hallowed precincts in so inappropriate and discordant a fashion.

The moon was nearing the full, but the sky all day long had been overcast, and the evening witnessed no improvement. Nothing daunted, we trailed into that incomparable garden in a ruthless crowd, the din and clatter of our expedition searching every recess and

alcove, quickening the echoes of the night, shattering that exquisite peace which here, if anywhere, should reign supreme. Above the general noise and turmoil that we created arose unrivalled the strident devastating tones of an American enthusiast.

Outraged nature, with an admirable discrimination that sometimes characterizes her performance, declined to provide us with the particular atmospheric effects which are essential to a proper appreciation of what every traveller looks forward to as the supreme experience of his earthly pilgrimage. Not even a fitful gleam from the moon illuminated the details around us.

If there is one corner of the whole world where I can dispense with the companionship of my fellow-creatures it is in the garden of the Taj at Agra. In this idiosyncrasy I no doubt share a popular prejudice with all those of mankind who have any sense of the fitness of things. More and more as we tarried did this performance of ours play upon my distracted nerves. Relentlessly we surged through the garden alleys, the great tomb itself almost indistinguishable from the depressing darkness that persistently enshrouded its neighbourhood, until from weariness and disillusionment, to my relief, we beat a retreat.

This is not the way to visit the Taj. Some years previously I had spent a week alone at Agra. It was at the time of the full moon, at the end of the hot weather—no tourist within a thousand miles. Many blissful moments by day and night I enjoyed in that exquisite garden, gazing at the great shrine dazzling snow-white in the September sun against a noonday sky of burnished steel, or, after nightfall, gleaming like a vast pearl of matchless orient set in the deep azure of a quivering starlit heaven. One of those nights in particular abides in the storehouse of my memory. Two other human beings, who, despite long familiarity with Agra's treasures, shared my new-born enthusiasm to the full—the Commissioner and his wife—invited me to accompany them after the hour when the great gate is closed to everyone save the privileged. We three worshippers wandered into the garden alone and ensconced ourselves in the dark recesses of a kiosk, the graceful archway of its colonnade forming a perfect frame for the Taj itself. The moon was at its zenith, and as we gazed seemed to invest it with some magic attribute, which made it appear to our spell-bound senses vivid yet evanescent, stupendous yet ethereal, combining in an incomprehensible fashion sublimity with

pathos. Never before had I seen, never again I believe will I see, a vision so entrancing. We stood together for a while in that silence which the inadequacy of any words of admiration imposes. The theme of the Taj is a despairing one for any mortal man to handle. Poet, prose writer and painter have all alike tried to translate into the terms of their respective arts the emotions that it awakens, but all have egregiously failed.

A distinguished British delegate at the Round Table Conference allowed himself, in the course of one of his fervid perorations, the employment of a most unfortunate metaphor. He was at pains to describe the granting of constitutional reforms to India as the building of another Taj Mahal. An Indian lady, prominent in public life, was quick to recognize the extremely inappropriate nature of this solecism and reminded us that the Taj Mahal, far from being emblematic of progress, was the tomb of a tyrant constructed by slave labour, the symbol of servitude rather than of freedom.

Whatever else the Taj may connote, no one could associate it with any modern movement, political or otherwise. On the contrary, I cannot imagine a more effective antidote for nerves frayed by incessant

political controversy than a solitary ramble in that lovely shalimar which forms its setting. Once through the massive rose-red gateway you have passed beyond the confines of the material world and have left all things mundane behind to steep your soul in Lethe's stream. No—here the thoughts, the sayings, the happenings of to-day have no place. It is all of yesterday. Where Shah Jehan and his beloved take their "fragrant sleep" lies buried a whole system of government over men which is as defunct as the earth's pale satellite whose ghostly ray reveals to us in all its rapture of repose this phantom of the things which have been.

Yet while outside its portals away in that world which is so far banished from the mind, Indians in their infatuation clamour for Western systems, Western laws, Western modes of life, here through the silence of this haunted garden there comes to those who reflect upon these things a whispering doubt. Were those old systems after all so much at fault, were they so inappropriate to the genius of an Eastern race? Tyranny may have characterized them with all the evils that tyranny brings in its train. But can it be gainsaid that a benevolent personal rule gave peace, security and contentment to peoples

traditionally susceptible to its influence and control? Has democracy so clean a record? Under its ægis has there been no crushing of the weak by the strong, no hideous contrast of wealth and poverty? Have there been no fatherless children and widows to bear witness to the savagery of war? Is corruption no longer prevalent? Are we, who boast of our system, freed from "variance, emulations, wrath, strife"?

Are we so confident that such a sapling as we propose to graft on to an immemorial stock will bring forth in due season peace and happiness, truth and justice? Who knows? . . . Who knows . . .?

CHAPTER VII

IN the evening of 29th November we left for the United Provinces. Sir John Simon regarded our visit there as the crux of the whole tour, so, evidently, did the Swarajists who, under the lead of Jahalawal Nehru, endeavoured to work up the most spectacular of all the demonstrations against us. But the authorities had for once anticipated the enemy. We arrived at Lucknow Station in the early morning of 30th November, where we found representatives of all that is best in the Province. One of the English officials told me that Nehru had been rehearsing the demonstration. I should have thought that a spontaneous ebullition of nationalist sentiment hardly required rehearsal if it was genuine. Be that as it may, the effort on the occasion of our arrival was feeble enough, and was effectively counteracted by large crowds of Indians holding banners of welcome.

I was most comfortably and hospitably lodged with the Commissioner, Mr. Cassells,

in an attractive old-fashioned bungalow of pre-Mutiny days. The Commission held its conferences in the New Council Hall, a huge flamboyant building where we were introduced to the United Provinces Indian Wing, a thoroughly competent body. At our conference they seemed sound and sensible in their attitude towards the various constitutional problems, but rather too apt to ask questions on what might be called parochial as opposed to provincial subjects.

On 3rd December I repaired to Government House, where the members of the Commission foregathered to make an expedition to Cawnpore. What the precise object of this visit could possibly have been, or what bearing it could have upon the Commission's task, I was never able to ascertain, but it certainly had disastrous consequences. The distance was about 50 miles. On arrival we met the Commissioner and various officials at the Ganges Bridge. We crossed by a rather broken-down iron-girder causeway, and then entered Cawnpore. The authorities had apparently entered into a sort of compact with the Swarajists, allowing them to make a demonstration only at certain points of our route through the town—an almost incredible proceeding. As was only to be expected, the

compact was not observed. From morning until evening the town was in a riot. The police were insufficient to keep order or to protect us, and constantly during the day were not conspicuously successful in their efforts to discharge their proper functions. Our opponents had drafted in students from Allahabad and elsewhere and had succeeded most effectively in stirring up the mob. Hostile crowds infested our route everywhere, surging out into the middle of the street. Why there was no resort on their part to violence it is difficult to determine. Had the crowd known beforehand how easy it had all been made for them, possibly they would have taken still better advantage than they did of the occasion. In any case it was a sorry business and doubtless had its undesirable reactions upon our fortunes for many days to come. These were people who knew what they were demonstrating about and were out to discredit the British raj *coram-populo*.

The three cars in front, as we entered the town, had passed when the crowd closed in. I was in the fourth. It was impossible to moderate our speed as the demonstrators were in too ugly a mood, and therefore there was nothing for it but to forge ahead and

trust to no one being killed or hurt. Had any such incident occurred it would have undoubtedly gone ill with us.

We arrived safely at the headquarters of the Chamber of Commerce, where we had some refreshment and afterwards went off in different directions to inspect the tanneries and bootmaking workshops, the principal industries of the town. We then joined up for lunch at the house of Sir Thomas Smith, one of the leading captains of industry in the Province, still within earshot of angry crowds. Having visited the scenes of the Mutiny, we returned to the main streets where we were subjected to another extremely hostile demonstration with the populace completely out of hand. Outside the town we visited a tiresome uplift centre, and it was near here that an enormous crowd again collected, shouting angry and insulting cries. The police, however, managed to effect for us an ignominious escape from their attentions by a devious route to Mrs. Allen's house, where we were due to attend a garden party. On the way we passed through the grounds of the Agricultural College, where the students had collected under the guidance, as I was subsequently informed, of their Principal. Mr. Munro, the Collector, told me that they

had promised not to do so, with the consequence that there were no police to say them nay. They went quite wild, surged up against our cars and threw dust at us. In the late evening we motored by devious ways through the town back to the station, feeling thoroughly crestfallen. It is inconceivable that Government should have allowed such a discreditable performance.

On 4th December we attended a most wonderful *tomasha* given by the Talukdars of Oudh, the great landowners, in the Kaser Bagh garden. The whole place was illuminated by countless thousands of lights, some electric, some oil lamps, the latter much the more effective on account of the shimmering effect they produce. I was told that 2000 rupees was spent in wages for the lamplighters alone. All round the square was gathered a vast crowd of spectators held in check by innumerable police patrols. We drove up to the durbar hall which was set in the middle of the garden ablaze with light and decoration. At the end of the hall were two silver thrones under a canopy for the Governor and Lady Hailey. The Talukdars read an address and then filed past their Excellencies, making due obeisance. Sir Malcolm in his speech seemed to provide them

with rather more than they had bargained for, addressing to them as he did, some very plain hints about their relations with their dependants and the prospect of constitutional reforms making it incumbent upon them to alter their somewhat too feudal methods. We then sat on a balcony and watched fireworks, which always leave me unimpressed. I found the many-coloured crowd in the streets, the women in their lovely saris like a flower garden, a far more arresting sight than any pyrotechnic display.

Since our ill-starred visit to Cawnpore we had all come to the conclusion that it was high time to make some representations to the Government of India against the subjection of the Commission to such ignominious treatment. Sir John invited his colleagues to a discussion on the matter. He seemed to be concerned with some method of rendering these demonstrations futile. It was, however, not so much a question of method as of policy. There could surely be no alternative between allowing these demonstrations and not allowing them at all. Any public display of sentiment against constituted authority would unquestionably have very serious reactions when the reforms came to be further implemented, in virtue of the

fact that the Statutory Commission was being brought into hatred and contempt in the public streets all over India by these humiliating imbecilities. Subsequent events proved that the only course for Government to pursue was to firmly prohibit demonstrations of any insulting nature to the British raj. Inspector-Generals of Police and other authorities all over India, who are far more familiar with the psychology of the Indian crowds than officials who sit remote in Delhi or in the fastnesses of Simla, had one and all told me that these demonstrations were producing a disastrous effect, and that they could be suppressed with the greatest ease, although obviously the longer they were allowed, the more difficult it would be to stop them, and that if they were suppressed such action would have the most salutary effect upon the Indian mind. The average Indian "man in the street" regards concessions merely as weaknesses, and despises those from whom he acquires them. Moreover, he not only does not resent firmness but he respects it.

The most interesting point raised at our joint conference in Lucknow was one which was destined to become the crux of the whole constitutional problem. A very persistent

demand was now being made, not only by the Congress leaders, but even by the more moderate Indian politicians, for what was described as responsible government. The few who have really thought the matter out with any degree of consistency evidently mean to convey by this phrase some form of executive responsible to a legislature which in its turn is responsible to an electorate. It is difficult to appreciate how such a system could obtain without party government. A Cabinet must have a majority if it is to function effectively, and this connotes the existence of definite parties. What chance there was of a party system evolving in India under the existing circumstances was difficult to envisage. The inferences we drew from discussions at the Joint Free Conference were, first, that it would never be a feasible proposition to reproduce faithfully the English constitution; and, secondly, it would only be practicable to have an executive responsible to the Legislature by devising some form of artificial majority. This complex problem seemed to have no terrors for the home politicians who subsequently sat around the Conference Table in St. James's Palace, but to the Commission on the spot it bristled with difficulties.

Those who criticized our final recommendations for the constitution of the Centre condemned them as reactionary. Indians labour under the extraordinary delusion that unless you adopt a slavish imitation of the British Parliament you are retarding their progress, keeping them in subjugation, and that to deny it to them is therefore an affront to their dignity and a reflection upon their capacity to govern themselves. There could be no greater misconception of the situation and no more egregious fallacy. The Commissioners in their report were most solicitous to explain that, quite apart from the consideration that the amorphous and heterogeneous populations which compose India may not be prepared for so startling an innovation as responsibility at the Centre, in any case responsible government as it exists in England to-day might not at any future time or under any set of circumstances be the suitable or appropriate form to be adopted in an Indian constitution even if the populations of India were to become as advanced in education politically and socially as ourselves. The conditions for responsibility as we understand the expression, namely an executive drawn from a single party which depends for its existence from day to day on the votes

of members directly elected by an electorate, may never exist in India.

In the second place, we decided that the area and population of the central constituencies were much too unwieldy to enable any contact to be established between the member and his constituents, an essential element in " responsibility." As to " responsibility with safeguards," which I prefer to call by a name not too pleasant in the ears of Indians—dyarchy—we came to the conclusion that the responsibility for the subjects with which the Centre is concerned cannot be departmentalized.

We are now told there is a unanimous requisition for responsibility, that it is the only subject on which all are agreed, the one common denominator which associates together all these conflicting elements in the body politic of India. But it must be borne in mind that the demand put forward by various sections for responsibility is put forward in various ways. In the first place, you have the extreme Congress men, who ask for immediate responsibility without any conditions. They perhaps deserve such a fate. Then there is the moderate Hindu element, that asks for responsibility subject to various safeguards. Whether this is responsibility

or not depends of course upon the extent and measure of the safeguards. Then the minority communities, representing some hundred million people in India, favour responsibility on conditions which they are aware are not likely to be fulfilled, which is a different matter to accepting responsibility without reserve. Finally, be it said, the Princes, who have made every sort of concession and offered to make every kind of sacrifice in order to help India to realize a federal system of government, have not been very explicit as to what with them responsibility connotes.[1]

I could, therefore, see no reason to depart from our recommendations of a Central Federal Legislature which would contain within itself the power to evolve self-government, although this solution admittedly bristles with difficulties.

While agreeing that we should suggest a form of constitution which would be capable of development from within, I was in some perplexity—working on this objective—as to what would be the ultimate process of realizing any form of responsible government at the Centre. If for some time to come India has to be content with a constitution which,

[1] Written in August, 1932.

although potentially democratic, must of necessity be hedged round with so many safeguards—if there is to be no scheme, such as the Montagu-Chelmsford report suggests, by which progress towards responsible government is definitely mapped out stage by stage —it was difficult to determine how, why and when those prerogatives hitherto inherent in the Governor-General and which are obviously inimical to responsible government, could be relinquished.

The Governor-General's power to veto legislation may in time fall into disuse, just as the Crown's veto has fallen into disuse in Great Britain. Another suggestion made was that a revision of instructions may be found desirable hereafter for the purpose of limiting the exercise by the Governor-General of his prerogative powers or of assisting to establish conventions under which such powers are treated as having lapsed. The first suggestion leaves the solving of the problem to the " inevitability of gradualness." But Indians have not had a very encouraging experience of leaving the constitutional plant to grow of its own accord. There was no very perceptible measure of evolution from the date of Queen Victoria's pronouncement to the advent of Edwin Montagu at the India Office.

We can hardly blame the Indians for not taking full advantage of conventions and preferring advance by explicit statutory provision guaranteed and enacted by an Act of the British Parliament. It seemed doubtful, therefore, if the proposal to rely upon convention would prove acceptable to the majority of influential Indians. As, however, little that we suggested was likely to be received with any degree of enthusiasm in that quarter, we could afford to set such a consideration on one side.

Without arguing in favour of any precise statutory direction or enactment for India, if we recommended that a considerable element of personal and autocratic rule should obtain for some time to come it could hardly be expected that Indians would not complain that it would be impossible ever to be quit of the Governor-General's prerogatives if the constitution was not to be subject to periodic revision from without. We could not rely upon the relations between an authoritative legislature and an official executive being modified merely by the growth of convention and the gradual disuse of powers of certification or veto. It may be true that in the case of our other dependencies the relations of the Executive Government to the Legis-

lature have developed on democratic lines as the result of natural growth, but it is difficult to believe there is any analogy in a constitution appropriate to educated progressive peoples and a constitution framed to include within its scope a number of heterogeneous Indian communities for the most part in a backward condition of civilization.

Instructions might be issued by the Secretary of State, on the authority of Parliament, to the Governor-General from time to time, and these instructions would constitute the instrument by which the steps to be taken towards full responsible government should be indicated, but although such a scheme possesses the supreme merit of obviating the necessity of Statutory Commissions, in actual effect it appears to differ very little from that suggested by the Montagu-Chelmsford report—namely, the scheme by which there should be periodic revision and consequent statutory enactment. It has been contended, however, that such instructions would not be quite so definite as statutory enactments, would prove more elastic and would, therefore, create conditions more favourable for growth from within.

We would then be confronted with the question, by whom would the Secretary of

State be guided in his estimate of the time and method of the progressive steps towards responsible government? Presumably by the men on the spot and by the general trend of opinion and events in India itself. At this point it would be very important indeed to reiterate and lay stress upon that paragraph in the Preamble of the Government of India Act which insists that progress will depend upon the measure of co-operation that responsible Indians are prepared to accord to Government. The notion that it is not so much co-operation as coercion that exacts concessions from the Imperial Parliament has already obtained too firm a hold in India. One of the factors, therefore, that would have to guide the Secretary of State in his decision when and how to relax control would be the measure of co-operation the Government received from Indians themselves.

The question of the joint responsibility of members of the Governor-General's Ministry was often discussed at our sessions. It was generally agreed that the ideal to be aimed at was that individual members of the Viceroy's Cabinet should stand or fall with it, but that in view of the existing situation it is essential for this purpose that the tenure of Ministerial office should be strengthened. One of the greatest difficulties that the Viceroy will

experience for some time to come will present itself on the occasions when he re-constitutes his Cabinet after an election, and endeavours "to give due weight to the distribution of parties." At present a party system is not existent or, if it has developed at all, it has developed upon wrong lines. Hitherto whatever parties have been organized have been merely organized with two purposes in view—to oppose the Government or to force constitutional advance. One can only hope that such a party system will develop as will enable the Viceroy to form a Cabinet on party lines.

The conclusions we ultimately reached with reference to the Centre were based upon the consideration that the practical difficulties of immediately applying the principles of Western democracy to so large a unit as British India were insuperable, and that certain features of the existing situation of India, so long as they persist, render the immediate grant of complete responsible self-government outside the range of practical politics.

We were faced with the choice if not of evils at any rate of systems which have no precedent and which will be of doubtful acceptance to the intelligentsia of India.

During the course of our visit Sir Malcolm Hailey gave us the benefit of his advice on

some of the more dominant issues. He confessed that since his transference from the Governorship of the Punjab to that of the United Provinces he had been constrained to re-orient his outlook upon the Indian constitutional problem. While it would be injudicious, nay, reprehensible, to place on public record the detail of this and other confidential discussions of a like description, it can at least be recorded in these pages that not a single authority of consequence—British or Indian—whose advice we could respect and rely upon, in all our extensive experience, ever spoke with any degree of optimism as to rapid and spectacular constitutional advance. On the contrary, one and all counselled caution and restraint. Nor was this the only occasion for the Commission contemplating the situation with anything but misgivings. It was very noteworthy that but few of those whose position and experience entitled them to speak with any degree of authority were either willing or able to supply us with original suggestions, although they were all ready enough to deprecate and expose the fallacies of any suggestions that we ourselves were at pains to submit to them for examination and comment. With hardly an exception they imparted advice

with great reserve and with no very strong convictions. It indicated to us some measure of the complexity of the problem that those who could speak with authority, among whom were to be numbered the most experienced and able administrators that India has ever produced, were reluctant to contribute definite ideas. And then at home we have junior back-bench members on all sides in the House of Commons who have never been near India, who have had no experience of its peoples, with calm effrontery giving glib opinions as to the solution of the problem, and others applauding such youthful indiscretions.

We varied our long and exacting labours on the Conference at Lucknow with a few visits of inspection to various institutions. The Chief Justice took us to see the Lucknow Jail in order to impress upon us the iniquity of the system he is gallantly endeavouring to get reformed. But the Council apparently does not take interest in such things. The prison was clean although the system upon which it was run was deplorable. There were well over a thousand prisoners and only twenty-seven paid warders. The rest of those who kept watch and ward were convict supervisors. The dormitories contained fifty beds apiece, lit by only two hurricane lamps, and

practically the only supervision at night was exercised by men who are convicts themselves. What goes on under such circumstances can be better imagined than described. There was hardly any system of classification, although a great many of the young men seemed to be murderers or dacoits. The previous year there were nearly 800 murders in this Province, which has about the same population as England.

We left Lucknow in the evening of 11th December and arrived at six o'clock on the following morning at Patna Station, where we spent at least an hour while a crowd of ignorant hirelings yelled themselves hoarse with cries which might have been those of dissent or welcome—doubtless it was all the same to them provided a sufficient number of annas were forthcoming from the Swaraj war chests to reward them for their pains. One of the police officers told me they had been there since three in the morning. None of the Patna officials understood why this sort of exhibition was permitted by those set in authority over them.

We left our train at seven-thirty and were driven to the houses of our various hosts—in my case that of Mr. Sifton, then a member of the Executive. The new Patna is laid out

in almost as elaborate a manner as the new Delhi—magnificent new Secretariat, Council Hall, and above all, Government House, the most resplendent of any in India compared to the size and capacity of its capital town. At eleven-thirty in the morning we met in Conference, actually in the Legislative Chamber of Bihar and Orissa. We were introduced here to a new and interesting subject, the backward tracts. One of the problems, not the least easy of solution in connection with our labours, was that of how to fit in with the reformed constitution the inhabitants of these districts that are to be found in various parts of the sub-continent who hitherto seem to have lived an existence separate in laws and customs from the rest of India. Numerically considerable to this day, these aboriginals are commonly supposed to be the remnants of pre-Aryan races whom the various invasions of India have left unaffected and uninfluenced. The problem is an acute one in the Province of Bihar and Orissa, where, in the plateau of Chota Nagpur, in the Santal Paganas and in Sambalpur they reside, having completely failed to keep pace with the march of civilization. We had a private discussion at Government House later in the day. The matters we discussed were, first, the continued demon-

strations against us in the streets. No answer to our remonstrance had yet been received from the Viceroy—second, a visit of the Central Indian Committee to London which we all agreed would, by giving them a status, do something to counteract the intrigues of the Congress leaders who at that moment were exercising all their resources to detach them from the Commission or, in the alternative, to induce them to write a report on Congress lines by promising them as a reward unopposed returns at the election in the following autumn. The third subject of our discussion was the complicated question of the rearrangement of provinces on racial lines particularly in relation to the Oriya-speaking peoples. We decided to form a sub-committee for this purpose.

During my stay in Patna I had a long discussion with one of the officials, who seemed to have studied the problem of the transference of Law and Order with more than the usual degree of care and intelligence. The gist of his remarks was that we could not transfer Law and Order unconditionally—there must be safeguards in reserve against an emergency. He agreed we could not refuse to transfer Law and Order without qualification, because no further measure of reforms

would prove acceptable were this service reserved, because under such circumstances Indian officials would never be afforded any opportunity to learn responsibility, and because it was essential that the Inspector-General should have immediate access to the Minister rather than through an intermediary. Further, he expressed the opinion that were Law and Order transferred, undoubtedly co-operation between police and people would be rendered easier of achievement. At present the police, who rely too much on the fact that the Central Government protects them, are regarded merely as the agents of the Executive. All of which sounded good sense enough.

Asked of what his safeguards would consist, he replied that the Central Government would subsidize the local police on condition that certain standards of numbers, efficiency, etc., could be maintained and that it should reserve wide powers of inspection. He postulated that there must be joint Cabinet responsibility in order to obviate the danger of a Minister being influenced by communal bias. I could not fail to make the observation that there seemed no likelihood of a party system being evolved in the near future, and until any such developed there was no chance

of any stability in the Cabinet. My objection to the scheme, which Sir John Simon shared, was that it was not a real transference and therefore would please nobody. I was becoming more than ever convinced that we must transfer all the remaining reserved subjects—with sufficient safeguards—but this view was hardly at that time shared by any officials and authorities in India. I myself could see no third alternative to granting what is called provincial autonomy and making no advance at all, a decision which would inevitably have combined the whole of India against us.

He admitted that deterioration at first would be inevitable, but he insisted that we must be prepared to face such a consequence. The truth is that in considering these constitutional problems in India we are invariably confronted with a choice of evils. There is consequently no alternative but to choose the least.

On 18th December we received the shocking news of the foul and cowardly murder—I believe classified as a political crime—of a young police officer, Sanders, in Lahore, who had charge of us there. We had been much in association with the splendid young subalterns of this Service on our travels, and it naturally went to our hearts to learn that one

of them, who I believe showed exceptional promise and who had been in charge of us, should have been so vilely done to death. Who is really responsible for these dastardly outrages? Surely not the half-witted actual assailants but the wretched agitators, male and female, who had been making speeches and writing to the Press calling upon the youth of India to wreak vengeance upon authority. These are the miscreants who should suffer the penalty of the law for such a senseless and cowardly crime.

We held another long conference at Government House with the Governor, Sir Hugh Stephenson, after which I had an interesting discussion with a prominent member of the Government. The latter said he believed Edwin Montagu was wrong to suggest a democratic form of constitution for India when he did—he should have Indianised the bureaucracy. I asked him if he thought such a scheme would have so educated the political leaders in India that eventually you would have in hand enough competent men to start Parliamentary Government on British lines, and he seemed disposed to agree.

We experienced the usual quiet send-off from the station by various officials late on the night of 19th December. On the fol-

lowing morning our special pulled up at a station called Isri—a delightful spot with hills wherever the eye rested, trees covering them with massive foliage up to the very horizon. After breakfast in the train we set off in motor-cars on a run of 110 miles through the Hazaribagh to Ranchi along a perfectly metalled road which ascended most of the way, our destination being about two thousand feet above sea-level. Chota Nagpur is one of the beauty spots of India. It is the habitat of some of the aboriginal Indian tribes, happy cheerful people who inhabit far cleaner and more wholesome villages than does the average Indian of higher caste—with attractive white cottages well tiled, not unlike their counterpart in Devonshire. They seem to have an ingrained prejudice against wearing what no doubt they regard as a superabundance of clothes. Our road lay through a wonderful jungle—very hilly with magnificent views. The Commissioner, Berthoud by name, met us in Ranchi, a pleasant-looking township, and entertained us at a large luncheon-party at which we were introduced to the Maharaja of Chota Nagpur. In the afternoon we were taken to a typical tea plantation outside the town and made our first acquaintance with some of the backward-tracts

inhabitants. A number of the aboriginal ladies brightly dressed, with flowers in their hair, displaying masses of silver jewellery, performed a dance in our honour, joining arms in long rows, moving their feet rhythmically and chanting the while a curious but not unmelodious refrain.

As the sun was setting we started on a further 40-miles run to Muhri where we rejoined the train and the other half of the Commission who had been to inspect the coal-fields. The moon was but young, so we saw little of this delectable country—traversing it in darkness that was almost complete.

On the following morning, 21st December, we found ourselves in the neighbourhood of Calcutta. I noticed that all along the line villagers were standing in crowds to watch our special as it passed, but there were no signs of black flags. The villagers in this part of Bengal are well built and apparently well-nourished specimens of humanity.

We arrived in Calcutta Station at ten o'clock in the morning. Workmen were busy clearing away the decorations which had been placed there to greet the elder Nehru, who had purposely changed the date of his arrival to synchronize with ours in order, I suppose,

to establish a contrast in his favour. He must have regretted the decision. From all accounts it was indeed a contrast, and a most infelicitous one for himself. He had to submit to the most ludicrous indignities at the instance of his followers, whose excess of enthusiasm had evidently outrun their sense of the appropriate. He was made to progress through the streets ensconced in a shandrydan drawn by twenty-four circus horses bestridden by postilions dressed in pink and green. The organizers of this exotic demonstration had, I was told, previously advertised in the newspapers for a band which should play in the procession. "Preference will be given," so ran the advertisement, "to those who have had previous experience of musical instruments." He was met in the town by a comic army commanded by a pantomime field-marshal. On arrival at his residence he found stationed on each side of the gateway two mounted men as bodyguard, a travesty of the original at Government House. It is difficult to appreciate how anyone of his standing and intelligence could have lent his name and risked his fame in a performance so childishly absurd. Perhaps he rated low the intelligence of his following. It was certainly a significant contrast to our arrival, which I hope made up

in dignity what it lacked in decoration. There had been, however, evidently some apprehension on our account. The Governor, Sir Stanley Jackson, told me subsequently that the police authorities were so anxious for our safety that they wanted us to sneak across the river in a ferry-boat instead of going through the streets, but he had promptly cancelled a scheme which would not only have appeared ignominious for the Commission but was—as indeed events proved—entirely uncalled for.

I was heartily glad to return once more to Government House, where Sir Stanley Jackson had kindly invited me to spend with him what little Christmas holiday was allowed to the Commission. On this occasion I was luxuriously lodged in one of the wings of this sumptuous palace looking out on that historic flight of steps where the outgoing and incoming Viceroys in bygone days were accustomed to exchange greetings and farewells. It was indeed a relief to be able to obtain a short respite from our labours and, as an antidote, to indulge in a round of festivities which at Christmas time are a traditional feature all over India—races, dances, military reviews, polo tournaments and the like. Indians of all creeds join heartily in our Christmas

festivities, and I was much embarrassed by a perfect inundation of Christmas cards sent to me by Indians whose names, titles and identity I often failed to establish. The Viceroy was at this time in Calcutta occupying his own palace, " Belvedere," which compares very unfavourably in architecture and amenities with the Government House.

The Congress meeting which took place in Calcutta during the latter part of December revealed a large majority in favour of " Independence." Nothing indicates more clearly that these particular leaders of thought—if so they can be called—are incompetent to lead or to think than their advancement of this unintelligible claim. But the most despairing feature of this separatist movement was that such fantastic ideas were gaining a hold upon Young India. There was, however, possibly some consolation in the fact that this claim for independence antagonized the Pundit Malaviya and many of the moderates who had previously been lured into the Congress fold. It was an egregious tactical blunder on the part of the Pundit Motilal Nehru, who now seemed to have subsided completely under the influence of his son, to lend his authority to such manifestly futile tactics.

I lunched with the Viceroy one day at

" Belvedere " and sat next to him. Amongst other topics upon which I sought his views was as to the chances of any measure of success attending the non-co-operation threat. He replied in the negative. I inquired of him how he would deal with the movement if it materialized. He evidently pinned his faith to proper precautions being taken in good time. To judge by its previous record it was legitimate to doubt whether the Government of India would sufficiently anticipate the movement. Nothing hitherto had been done to counteract its influence. The so-called League of Youth which had come into being under the ægis of the younger Nehru, for instance, was doing infinite harm with complete impunity according to all confidential reports, but if only strong steps had been taken at its initiation an infinity of trouble in this direction would have been saved.

Lord Irwin, in the course of the conversation, alluded to the demonstrations against the Commission. On giving him my unaltered views he said it was only fair to remember that when they first started the whole business was regarded as a joke. Although he customarily talks in a soothing, disarming way he certainly did not convince me on this head. He informed me, however, that Sir

Malcolm Hailey had expressed himself very penitently about our visit to Cawnpore.

Amongst other festivities I attended during the Christmas recess was a gigantic dinner at Government House for the Nizam of Hyderabad. He arrived with a large retinue of family and staff, wearing European dress save for a stiff yellow turban adorned with a gleaming aigrette. I sat next to his sister, who was also in Western attire with gold filigree ornaments of the sort our Victorian grandmothers used to wear. It is tragic that Indian ladies do not always affect their national dress, which is infinitely more becoming to them than the fashions of the Rue de la Paix. I tried to find out how this princess passed her time in Hyderabad—apparently in modest seclusion. It is lamentable that the ladies of India who occupy great positions should not take a more prominent part in public life. Indians are so anxious to model themselves entirely upon the British precedent—it is curious that the emancipation of our women seems to have escaped their attention or at any rate has failed to inspire them with any anxiety to follow our example in this respect. After the ladies had left the room I drew up to one of our military authorities who told me what I had received con-

firmation of elsewhere, that an officer class would not be likely to evolve amongst Indians for many years to come. This is going to be a problem of some complexity in virtue of the consideration that Indians do not believe that we are sincere about the Indianisation of the Indian Army—and yet it will be quite impossible to force the pace.

We left Calcutta on New Year's Day, having profited much by this short respite from our labours. We motored away in the morning to Princeps Ghat, where a very pleasant white steam-launch awaited us. Here we met our Indian colleagues of the Central Committee. The launch steamed up to Howrah Station, where we entrained for Assam.

Our special came to a halt the next morning at a station on the bank of the great Brahmaputra River. Unfortunately a dense mist hung over the whole landscape, which we were informed under favourable atmospheric conditions presented a superb panorama. We walked down a sandy bank which resembled the seashore. Police were lining the route, but there was no need for them, as here everyone was either friendly or entirely ignorant of our identity. We boarded a most comfortable ferry-boat with a spacious upper deck,

where we breakfasted. It was perishingly cold. I tried to discern the view down the river, but only for a brief moment the mist lifted so that I could see faintly the outlines of a lovely island amidstream overgrown with trees, a conical hill in the middle on which was perched one of the most sacred of Hindu temples, where there is conducted a form of worship which Christians would consider obscene. The view, what we could see of it, looked more Chinese than Indian. The natives in this neighbourhood were of a distinctly more Mongolian type than any we had hitherto come in contact with. The ferry took us to the southern bank of the river, where we found a fleet of motors awaiting to take us the 50 miles of the journey to Shillong.

On our way to the capital town of Assam we passed through some of the most magnificent scenery in India, steadily ascending until we reached a height of between six and seven thousand feet, up and up through narrow ravines, imposing masses of rock towering above us, with the river hundreds of feet below brawling over a rocky watershed—mountains in the distance, dense jungle covering them right to their very summits, round dangerous hair-pin bends in the road, always

ascending through this luxuriant tropical forest, until after about 40 miles of such progress we emerged into what looked almost like Scotch scenery—the hills bare in some places, in others covered with fir-trees, wonderful views on every side. At last we came to a halt in a narrow pass, where we were met by various officials and an A.D.C. to the Governor of Assam.

The weather was perfectly lovely and the air invigorating, like that of a Swiss mountain resort. In a few minutes we were entering the so-called town of Shillong, which is merely a collection of bungalows, most of them built in the style of an English golf club-house, perched on hillocks which abound everywhere. It is of no avail building large many-storied houses in this part of the world, as it is visited periodically with such devastating earthquakes, one of which destroyed the town in 1897. We were lodged in the Pinewood Hotel. The view all round of hills clad with conifers was enchanting. This is a most fascinating part of India, very unlike the plains, but the rarefied air at so great a height makes every exertion taken an appreciable effort. In the evening we met our Indian colleagues at the Council Buildings, which bear the same resemblance to a golf club-

house as any other building in the neighbourhood. We were regaled with no hostile demonstrations, the reason being doubtless that it entailed too large an outlay to send any hirelings up for such a purpose to this remote spot. On the following day, 3rd January, we held a joint conference.

In the evening, the Tea Planters' Association, who were up here to give evidence before the Commission, entertained us at dinner in the hotel. They are fine fellows of the John Bull type, many of them the sons of North Country merchants, looking at things rather from the British angle, and in view of the trouble they have experienced small blame attaches to them on that account.

We spent an extremely pleasant week at Shillong. The climate is delicious, our work, which was not very strenuous, was alternated with rides through the shady pine-woods on frosty mornings.

Sir Laurie Hammond, the Governor of Assam, invited the Commission during its visit to accompany him to the Chinese frontier, where he had arranged to hold a meeting with some of the tribesmen. Accordingly on 8th January at a very early hour we set out by car for Gauhati. It was bitterly cold. Our driver stopped after we had been going

an hour to show us a view of the Everest range, which although it is 250 miles away is said to be within sight at this point, but I freely acknowledge that I could not lay any claim to success in such a test of long-range vision. We found our special train waiting for us at Gauhati. We embarked at once and then proceeded on our long trail through the Assam hill country, our object being to make a study, necessarily only perfunctory, of the hill tribesman and his ways. The rest of the day we were traversing a huge tract of jungle, attractive but somewhat monotonous.

On the following morning, 9th January, the train came to rest at a station called Tinsukia, in the heart of the Assam tea plantations, which we inspected. One of the planters told me of his early life there, which must have been very lonely and unsociable before the days of motors, as the neighbours are few and far between. The planters' bungalows are built in a peculiar fashion, the ground floor consisting merely of iron girders, the purpose of such construction being to keep out animals from the rooms above and to safeguard the dwellers from the damp.

Lunch given in honour of the Governor seemed quite interminable. In the late afternoon we motored up to Sadya and here the

interest of the day commenced. A parade ground had been arranged for by a river on a plain, the distant Himalayas on the Tibet border making an impressive back scene. Ranged round in a circle were groups of the various wild hill tribesmen who had marched a great distance, some of them over a hundred miles from the foothills which they inhabit, to meet the Governor. There was a great variety of dress and, it must be added, undress. Many of them wore amazing head adornments of skins, feathers and birds' beaks. They carried spears and swords—some had poisoned arrows which they warned us not to touch. They all possessed perfect manners. Interesting as this amazing polyglot heterogeneous collection of primitive races was in itself, its real significance to the Commission was that it was all comprised within the expression " India."

We motored back to our train, changed, and went off to dine with a Mr. Hunter, who entertained us in a very comfortable and luxurious bungalow. We were told a great deal about the political situation as far as it affected the tea planters. Swarajist agitators were constantly getting amongst the coolies. It was said that what would really happen if the Congress ideal of independence

was ever realized was that the British tea planter would have to abscond, and then the hill tribesmen would come down into the plains and loot and sack to their hearts' content. I have no doubt that this is exactly what would occur. After dinner we motored to a station about five miles away, where we rejoined our special train.

On the morning of 10th January we found ourselves at a station called Manipur Road, just north of Manipur State. We were met there by Dr. Hutton, the political officer of the Naga Hill District and an acknowledged expert on the aboriginal tribes, waiting for us with a number of cars to take us up into the hills. I had thought the road from Shillong to Gauhati one of the most beautiful I had ever seen in all my experience, but the 50 miles from Manipur Road to Kohima far surpasses anything I have imagined in my wildest dreams. We crossed a level plain for a few miles and then entered the great mountain range by a steep defile, the road running along a river not unlike a torrential Scotch "burn." The precipitous pinnacles of rock that flanked our route were completely covered by a luxuriant tangled mass of tropical vegetation. The ravine, being very deep, was cold and sunless in the early

morning, but as we mounted higher the sun's rays began to penetrate to us and tint with rose the jagged crests of the cliffs soaring above us. When we had ascended about three thousand feet we emerged on to a ridge from where we saw what must be one of the most glorious views in the whole world. We looked down upon a vast expanse of jungle, range upon range of endless rolling hills, covered with a dense forest stretching out into a far dim distance. The extent of the view was rendered all the more impressive by the reflection that this jungle is trackless, the haunt of every kind of big game, especially elephant and tiger, but probably none of it ever having been trodden by the foot of man.

We crossed at this point of our journey into another valley where we could see Kohima on the crest opposite. The road was well metalled. Natives, captivating little Nagas, every one of them waving a cheerful greeting to us, were to be seen on all sides working on the roadway and in the forests. They are short in figure, but very sturdy and healthy-looking, with very delightful countenances.

When we approached Kohima a scene presented itself which will never fade from my

memory. At the cross-roads, near to the village, were assembled representative groups from all the neighbouring hill tribes, hundreds of them decked out in their war-paint, naked except for loin-cloths and the most wonderful adornments of all sorts and kinds, huge spears in their hands. Some wore gigantic head-dresses made of feathers, skins or palm-leaves, armlets and necklaces of either elephant or boar tusks and large shells, others had many-hued satchels over their shoulders made of beads and goat's hair. Some were holding head-hunters' baskets, others had enormous tails attached to the small of their backs, made, we were told, of human hair. The men are for the most part short but admirably proportioned. They take great pride in the calves of their legs which are bound up with twine to make them swell to impressive dimensions. The whole scene was a riot of colour. As we approached they all started emitting their war-cries, each tribe different to the other. We descended from our cars and inspected them, a proceeding which evidently gave them much satisfaction. After a while Dr. Hutton escorted us to his bungalow for lunch, a delightful residence on the hill slope with an entrancing view of mountains on every

side. I had much interesting talk with him and a younger political officer who lives in a neighbouring district concerning his strange protégés. I asked them about the custom of head-hunting. He told me that there actually were head-hunters just over the border and that even the tribes in his district were potential head-hunters only that the British Government very properly refuses to countenance their indulgence in this particular form of native sport. He believed his own men practised the habit on the sly. He himself had often conversed with actual head-hunters, in fact, one of their gruesome trophies, which he had procured as a gift, adorned the walls of his office. He told me that there are three theories about head-hunting; one is that evil spirits have a preference for inhabiting skulls, and accordingly you must hang up as many skulls in the village as you can manage to secure so that the spirits will not disturb you; the second is that those whom you decapitate will be your slaves in the next world, but Dr. Hutton attached more importance to the third theory that these tribes, who are animists, are ambitious to collect as much "soul" as possible, and as the soul, according to their tenets, resides in the head, it

follows that the more heads you have, the more soul.

Dr. Hutton told me that the greatest delicacy for food was dog, and they prefer it somewhat "high." I had heard that when a Naga arrives in the village all the dogs thereof put their tails between their legs and run. This apparently fantastic story is very much corroborated by reliable evidence, and the only physical explanation is that dog-eaters have a peculiar aroma which is at once instinctively recognized as a danger signal by the village pariahs.

I asked about their religion. They believe in a Supreme Creator and in an after-life. They do not pray to the Creator for protection as they take that for granted, but they feel compunction about propitiating evil spirits.

Their morals are exceptional. They do not marry unduly young, and there is no prostitution. I asked why they were all so cleanly shaved, and how they could procure such efficient razors to effect this result. I was told that hair did not grow on their faces and that except for their heads they seemed to be non-hirsute.

I have dwelt at some length on the idiosyncrasies of these amazingly primitive peoples

because, for all political purposes, they are Indians, and because therefore we were confronted with the problem of fitting them also into the amazing mosaic of the reforms.

After lunch we all walked down to the Assam Rifles parade ground which is beautifully situated on a ridge between two hills. As soon as we were ready a signal was given, and the tribesmen came down in their war-paint and performed their traditional dances, each tribe having its different song and dance. They possess beautiful deep voices, very unlike the nasal high-pitched tones of the men of the plains. It was an amazing scene with the picturesque crowds looking on and the great blue Himalayan mountains in the distance.

The dance was of course interminably long and only our departure ended it—but ere we left two ceremonies were gone through. Firstly, some of the headmen, Hutton acting as their interpreter, gave us their views on their own political situation. Before we arrived they had been discussing it amongst themselves. They had said: "What is this we hear about a black king taking the place of the British raj? We much prefer to live as we are under Queen Victoria." It was then explained to them, as far as it was

possible to do so, that a suggestion had been made that they should join with the rest of India in the reforms. The result was that, in their interview with us, they begged that we should not put them under the Bengalis, whom they hate and upon whom they will inevitably declare war if the British raj goes. Sir John Simon gave them as much reassurance as he could within the limits of their understanding.

The second ceremony was a presentation of gifts to ourselves from the tribes. They gave us innumerable weapons of all sizes and shapes, which now adorn the walls of the High Commissioner's office in London. Some of them proceeded to undress to the irreducible minimum and handed us all their accoutrements until we were literally loaded with their discarded finery. When these affecting ceremonies were concluded it was time to depart and very reluctantly we left our friendly little aborigines. The 50-miles journey back to Manipur Road was terribly cold, but so beautiful that one could put up with any degree of discomfort for such an experience. We returned to Calcutta the same way that we had come, reaching Howrah Station at five-thirty on the morning of 12th January.

In our absence the Pundit Motilal Nehru had been doing everything in his power to work up a monster demonstration against us. His Press was shrieking for our blood. There was to be the most complete *hartal* on our return and the most monster demonstration that ever was known. But for some reason the whole affair was a dire fiasco contrary to the expectations of those who had charge of us, and who evidently anticipated the worst, for they hustled us out of the train at a very early hour before sunrise. The streets were wet and empty, reminding me of an arrival at Euston after a night in the Scotch Mail. We sped out across Howrah Bridge. Throughout the whole of the two or three miles to Government House there was not a soul about except the police who had mustered in unusually large numbers. Far down some of the side streets we saw a collection of miserable-looking Indians holding black flags, who had evidently been sitting there all night, doubtless in expectation of a substantial *quid pro quo* from Congress coffers.

The next few days were mainly spent with sittings at the Conference, which had begun to pall, we having asked all the questions that could possibly be of any significance

and received all the answers we were ever likely to obtain. At this point in our procedure we were only half-way through our tour, but we were more than three-quarters way through the evidence.

At one of the sessions in Calcutta we had the benefit of a consultation with the Education Sub-Committee which had been set up to assist the Commission in this branch of our subject. Sir Philip Hartog, Sir George Anderson, and Sir Amherst Selby Bigge all gave evidence. As a result of their tour they told us they were very unfavourably impressed with the slow progress education has made in India. They were willing to admit that this shortcoming is largely—not entirely—a question of finance, which fails to elicit the interest or engage the attention of the Indian intelligentsia. At a dinner-party given by Sir John Simon to the Education Committee that same evening I sat beside one of its Indian members and I joined issue with him on the subject. I explained to him that one of the reasons we had such an excellent system of education in England is that we consent to be taxed and rated to the extent of 72 millions a year for that purpose alone. Would Indians ever consent to have their taxation increased for

that or any other reason? They cheer the Pundit Motilal Nehru in a Congress *Pandal* when he makes his forecast of all that India will do when she gets Swaraj (or is it independence?) but will be no more patient of taxation under the government of Nehru than under the British raj.

At one of the numerous social functions we attended a member of the Central Indian Wing took me on one side and poured into my ear his apprehensions with regard to the dilatoriness of the Government of India in face of various signs of coming trouble. He evidently shared my view that officials at headquarters were allowing everything to slide. He spoke with the utmost concern of all these seditious movements which are inevitably undermining our influence. This incident was all the more intriguing because at breakfast the next morning at Government House another Indian member of the Central Committee took me aside and poured out much the same complaint. They certainly had the corroboration of all the British police authorities.

Before leaving Calcutta on 27th January the Commission were granted an interview with Sir Stanley Jackson in the big sitting-room which was formerly used by the Viceroy

as his sanctum, and where, I suppose, more Indian history has been made than anywhere else. These walls must have echoed to many an anxious conversation in former days between the Head of the Government of India and his advisers.

Sir Stanley Jackson was of the opinion that dyarchy could be made to work. He was—like so many others in authority at that time—opposed to the transference of Law and Order. But he failed to explain what would happen in India if we antagonized the moderate element, which would be the inevitable result if we refused to grant provincial autonomy with both hands.

CHAPTER VIII

ON the morning of 27th January, after bidding farewell to Sir Stanley and Lady Jackson and all the staff at the garden entrance, we departed in cars for Outram Ghat, only a few paces distant. Pleasant enough it was to start away in a boat moored almost at the garden gate, fanned by the cool breezes of the river, after the perpetual wearisome asphyxiating train journeys we had endured to excess. On this occasion there was no hostile demonstration of any kind. After breakfast we dropped down the Hooghly, a fine river but with rather monotonous scenery on either side for at least a hundred miles. We reached the estuary about sunset, but we had to weigh anchor for some time waiting for the tide to carry us over the big sand-bank. The Commission and the Indian Central Committee had the whole of the boat's accommodation to themselves. The waiters on board were Goanese, a race that has been described as the biggest joke in history. They are reputed to be the

descendants of the Spaniards who occupied Goa and who contracted alliances with Mahratta women with the express purpose of generating a fine fighting race. What they evidently did produce as a result of this eugenic blend of chauvinistic elements was a race that prefers to discharge the functions of cook and waiter rather than to wield the sword.

On the second day at sea, 29th January, in the afternoon we sighted land and soon after entered the wide mouth of the Irrawaddy, somewhat resembling Southampton Water but for an occasional glimpse of pagodas with their golden domes reflecting the sun's rays. The approach to Rangoon is disappointing—too many oil depots and other unsightly buildings defacing the river front, only redeemed by a fine view of the Shwadegon Pagoda, the largest and the most beautiful in the world, which dominates the town. Ministers and officials met us at the quayside. I entered a car with my host, the Chief Justice, Sir Guy Ruttledge, as soon as the formalities of greeting were complete. We sped through the streets of Rangoon, which might have been the streets of Marseilles or any European town but for the ubiquitous pagoda. The people, however, do

not resemble Continental races. There were huge crowds of them lining the streets—all quite friendly—attired in the most brilliant-hued costumes, the men wearing silk skirts or *longis* of every vivid colour imaginable. The Chief Justice's house was situated on the hill above the great Pagoda, which looked entrancing over the garden trees with the sun transforming its golden pinnacle into a column of flame.

It was bitterly cold at night. My bedroom, which was delightful and which reminded me of a Swiss chalet, was peculiar in that the windows, which were numerous, had no glass, only wooden shutters. Another peculiarity of the house was the tucktoo lizard, which in Burma shares the dwelling of the human race, and which emits an inconceivable barking noise, for choice in the early morning, enough to wake the dead, let alone the living.

On 30th January we held our preliminary meeting with the Burman Wing, several of them dressed in their picturesque native costumes, in a magnificent cool and airy building—the Medical College. Our discussions here chiefly turned upon the separation of Burma from India—a subject upon which the Committee and witnesses seemed fairly unanimous with the exception of a few

Indians with obvious prejudices—and the consequent financial difficulties which as usual in the East had not been given any adequate consideration.

The Governor of Burma, Sir Charles Innes, dispensed a great deal of hospitality to us at Government House—surely the most hideous dwelling in the world. Our discussions with him, which centred not only upon the all-absorbing question of the separation of Burma, but upon the wider issues of the Indian constitutional problem, were of considerable value.

As we were anxious to see something of the Chinese quarter of Rangoon the Commissioner made arrangements for us with that object. At about ten o'clock one night we proceeded to a police-station in the heart of the town where we picked up our guides. Our first entertainment was a Chinese gambling club. The authorities allow these controlled houses on the condition that only Chinese gamble there. Burmans, we were informed, are too apt to knife each other when they indulge in this form of recreation. Most of the gamblers appeared to be very young men, but Chinamen in this part of the world preserve a youthful appearance until about the age of thirty. We were then taken to an

opium den, which was situated in a very evil-looking quarter of the town, although there was nothing sinster-looking about the opium den itself, which was scrupulously clean and light. There was a large shelf occupying most of the available space covered with rush matting, upon which reposed some surprisingly neat healthy-looking Chinamen with their heads resting on wooden blocks—two men to each pipe, which they smoked with a gurgling sound over a small lamp placed between them. I asked one of them, a very cheerful-looking Chinese sailor, whether it gave him a headache in the morning. He answered, shaking with laughter (Chinese are apparently easily moved to mirth), " No yes," a reply which seemed rather to shirk the issue. There we left them smoking away until I suppose they passed into a soothing oblivion of their surroundings. From here we proceeded to the house of a rich Chinese merchant, who most kindly provided us with an entertainment of an original character. He met us at the door of his house, a tall, smart, good-looking man very neatly dressed. He led us upstairs. The whole house was full of guests, servants, and children—its appointments all seemed thoroughly promiscuous to a Western mind. In the sitting-

room was a number of Chinese actors and actresses "making up" their faces. On a verandah a dramatic performance was in progress. It appeared to consist more of acrobatics than dramatics, men with masks painted to represent demons, jumping about in every fantastic attitude, accompanied by musicians whose instruments consisted exclusively of small brass gongs and wooden drums. The actresses had curious high-pitched voices. The whole business was indescribable and like every form of entertainment in the East, interminable. After about an hour we left the performance in full swing, our host escorting us to his dining-room, at one end of which was what appeared to be a large elaborately-carved red lacquer altar with a gilt figure in the centre, incidentally used as a side-board. The walls were hung with looking-glasses covered with Chinese script. There were small yellow and red tags with writing on them depending from the doors. I asked my host their significance, and he informed me that his child was ill and these were prayers for his recovery. We sat down to an elaborate repast which, much to our amusement, we were invited to eat with chopsticks to the best of our ability. All the courses were Chinese, commencing with shark's fin

followed by many other traditional delicacies more quaint than appetizing to a Western palate. Wine flowed freely until it was time for us to take our departure. Acting on instructions we bade our kind host "Jem Sing," which being liberally interpreted I understand means, "May you live a hundred years," and we all went our several ways, I passing under the lovely golden Pagoda, lit up as it always is at night with brilliant circles of lamps, to the Chief Justice's house on the hill above the town.

Much as we had been entertained elsewhere in India, in Burma they were not behindhand in their generosity and hospitality towards us. Among other convivialities an influential association of Burmans gave us an entertainment in a vast *shamiana* hung with literally thousands of small Union Jacks—the effect, although bizarre enough, rather striking. There were three platforms upon which throughout the entertainment Burmese ballet girls, arrayed in brilliant-coloured close-fitting costumes, indulged in their traditional dances, or rather rhythmic movements. Their powers of endurance seemed to be indefinite. The accompanying music to my untrained ears was excruciating. When the Governor arrived he and the Commission

were ranged up on a platform and were presented with addresses in silver cases, all petitioning separation from India. One of the most interesting features of the entertainment was a special bench reserved for the Buddhist monks, who remained motionless in a sort of religious catalepsy as if they were quite unaware of their surroundings. One of these ascetics sat in a chair apart from the rest, evidently very holy, in a Buddha-like attitude of contemplation. I was told he was eighty-four years old and must accordingly have passed into an advanced stage of that calm complacency which is presumably the culmination of their earthly ambitions. When Sir John Simon was presented to him he seemed to wake from his reverie and to speak as if he were uttering a benediction. These monks are a prominent feature of Burma. Every youth, I was told, has to become a monk if it is only for a day or so —a kind of baptism or initiation into life, but many seem to continue to pursue this sacred calling in maturer years. They are not allowed to own any property and they live by begging. They perambulate the town with shaven heads, attired in saffron-coloured togas, and carrying a black alms bowl in their hands. They are supposed to be above

politics—but a section of them, I understand, broke through this tradition in order to carry on active propaganda against the Commission. I was told that Burmans flying from justice avoid it by joining the priesthood. Hence some very undesirable characters in their ranks who are doubtless euphemistically described as politically-minded *pounjis*!

On the afternoon of the 8th we left Rangoon for Mandalay, for many hours of it an incredibly dull and wearisome journey. We met with only one hostile demonstration along the line—a small band of monks accompanied by some very gay-looking ladies, with whom I believe they are not supposed to consort. Our presence in their midst doubtless afforded them an admirable excuse to indulge in this agreeable indiscretion.

We arrived at Mandalay early on 9th February. An enormous concourse of distinguished Burmans on the platform to greet us, no one outside in the streets. We were lodged at Government House, which is situated inside the famous Moat, the former palace of King Thibaw, a most curious wooden structure very barbaric in design, like everything in Burma—constructed of dark-brown teak and embellished with gilt ornamentation. Burmese architecture is clumsy and as every-

thing is always out of repair and nothing is ever repaired the general effect is depressing. King Thibaw's living-rooms, a succession of audience chambers built of enormous piles of wood, looked more like a kraal of a South Sea island chief than that of an Eastern potentate. I was thoroughly disappointed with Mandalay as a show place except for the wall round the Moat, with its lovely gateways, its ornamental cupolas and attractive bridges. There are some alluring environs up in the hills, notably Maymyo—the Government Hill Station—which reminded me of Sunningdale in its aspect and atmosphere.

On 11th February we left Mandalay by water, spending four days on the Irrawaddy steaming southwards. Early morning on the boat was perfectly delicious, as early mornings always are on any boat—but the rest of the day spent lounging on a promenade deck is an overrated amusement and inimical to work of which we always had a plentiful supply. The day long we steamed down the river, the banks of which were of clean white sand not unlike the Nile. In the afternoon we arrived opposite Pakokku, where we were provided with a typical demonstration of how nothing in India ever goes according to plan and of

how the worst alternative of several is invariably selected as a substitute for the original intention. We found ourselves opposite the Deputy Commissioner's house, where there was a perfect landing-stage and steps conveniently cut into the steep bank of the river, which we were afterwards told had been constructed for our special benefit. There was a small crowd of officials waiting there to receive us, but the captain of our boat, having been given no orders to bring it alongside, merely reversed his engines for a moment to give the assembled company the opportunity of waving to us, and then for some unaccountable reason proceeded fárther down the river to a perfectly disgusting village. The bank was covered with unspeakable refuse and when we landed our progress was disputed by some savage pariah dogs. We luckily found a broken-down taxi-cab and drove to the Club, where we met various officials and then returned to the boat, which by this time had been moored in the proper place, but unfortunately the two boats were lashed together close into the bank where the heat and the smell were both intolerable.

On the following morning we started off down the river again, our night having been

made hideous by the above-mentioned causes in addition to the din created by the crew the night long. An Indian coolie can never do anything quietly, and if he can get the opportunity of waking anyone it evidently gives him the liveliest satisfaction to do so. Although I have had much practice I have never been able to sleep through the yell of an Indian coolie.

The character of the river changed as we approached Pagan. This is indeed a place with a character of its own. From the water it had the appearance of an enormous town not unlike Constantinople, with endless domes and pinnacles outlined against the cloudless sky. We looked out our guide-books and discovered that it was one of the ancient capitals of Burma, that it was very sacred, and contained in earlier times 1,300 pagodas, about 600 of which still remain in various stages of repair and disrepair. I was informed that it was the custom in Burma for anyone who could afford it to build a pagoda, but as it is more blessed to build a new pagoda than to repair an old one, few have been endowed, with the deplorable result seen on every side. There are lovely hills in the background. We met with a gratifying reception on shore, where a small *shamiana* had been

erected in which the customary "pwe" dance was in progress performed by Burmese girls attired in the conventional ballet dress of the country. By the side of this exhibition a space had been cleared in the crowd that had come to welcome us, and some rush matting had been placed on the ground whereon a Burmese woman was "charming" a hamadryad about twelve feet long. They are the most poisonous snakes in India. I pursued inquiries as to whether it had been rendered innocuous by any means. Some people declared that it had been, others were equally positive against such an assumption. Certain it was that the lady was taking grave risks if it still retained its fangs. She kissed it on the mouth and seemed to have some subtle power over the monster.

After this quaint interlude a number of officials conducted us to a fleet of cars in which we made a tour of the ruins. I discovered that it was no longer a live town but as extinct as an inactive volcano, merely a vast collection of decaying pagodas, some of them dating back a thousand years. Of these the most remarkable is that which contains two gigantic figures of Buddha about ninety feet in extent, one in a sitting, the other in a recumbent posture. These colossal

figures are made of brick encased in plaster. We climbed on to the terrace of the largest pagoda in the town and obtained a wonderful view of the surrounding country.

When we were tired of simulating admiration of pagodas, a form of sight-seeing that palls rather quickly, we inspected the lacquer factory, which seemed to be the only feature of the whole town which was alive.

Our next halt along the river in the afternoon was at the Burma Oil Co. Oilfields, which at this point defile the banks of the river. I have never seen anything so loathsome and so aggressively hideous. This excursion satisfactorily finished with, we spent the rest of the day throbbing down the river.

Sir John Simon that evening invited me to discuss with him his scheme of reform as far as it had taken shape. He was now evidently reconciled to the idea of transferring all subjects in the Provinces with some rigid safeguards to balance so complete a concession. His tentative proposal for the problem of transfer of Law and Order was that the Governor should have power in the event of a crisis to transfer this subject from one Minister to another. For instance, supposing a Hindu was the Minister responsible for Law and Order and a communal riot

were to break out, the Governor could transfer the appropriate portfolio to a " neutral." In his newly-formed scheme there was evidently to be a certain amount of control from the Centre, probably more financial than administrative. With regard to the idea of a Federation, he was very solicitous to bring the Indian States gradually into a greater India. At the moment I felt very sceptical as to the probability of any such scheme maturing in virtue of the fact that it was difficult to understand what *quid pro quo* we were in a position to offer them. You would be saying to the Indian Princes, " Come into our Federation where you will find yourselves in a permanent minority at the mercy of those who are on the whole antipathetic to your own interests," a proposition they were not likely to welcome with any degree of enthusiasm.

Immediately after sunset we drew up alongside a small township called Sale, where having been informed that there was plague, the captain had orders to anchor in midstream and so, instead of proceeding to the next fuelling station farther down the river, he tied all three boats up together against the bank. It was a filthy place to select, and I watched with dismay our servants

cleaning the crockery in the foul slime of the river. We had a sleepless night—all three boats lashed together in the stench and heat and noise. It was an unspeakable relief to move away the following morning.

A lazy day succeeded. We sat on deck watching the panorama unfolding itself. A characteristic of this river is the perfectly beautiful fishing boats in which the fishermen pass their lives. They are very large, made of some dark red wood, very graceful lines, high in the bows and the stern, which is generally decorated with a green parrot or some such device. The deck cabin is covered in with bamboo matting and the sail is a large square one of a very artistic shade of yellow ochre.

Another noticeable and attractive feature of this great waterway is the enormous raft which they use for timber. I should imagine these floating platforms are fifty yards square at least, and they have a very neat little hut built in the middle where the men and their wives live a regular village life.

In the afternoon we arrived at Migyaungye, where we tied up against our sister ship. We scrambled ashore but found nothing interesting with which to occupy our attention. Mercifully this night we were allowed to

anchor in midstream, where, as a blessed relief from the heat off the shore, we encountered a sweet cool breeze.

We spent another day of steaming down the river which was beautiful enough except for the fact that the trees everywhere in Burma are lifeless at this time of the year. In the afternoon of the 14th February, to our infinite relief, we came in sight of Prome where we disembarked, and were met by a large concourse of officials, British and Indian, who conducted us through a corridor of palms which they had made for our benefit up to the road. Some members of the I.C.S. asked us to play tennis at the Club, an invitation we gladly accepted after four days' enforced idleness on the river. We joined our special train that night.

On the 15th February we found ourselves alongside the boat in Rangoon Harbour at about six o'clock in the morning. The original arrangement was that we should be allowed to sleep as long as we cared in the train and then walk across to the boat for breakfast. But in India such comfortable plans gang not oft but always aglee. Instead, an army of yelling coolies had been imported on to the platform and ensured the miscarriage of any such satisfactory scheme. We even-

tually dropped down the river *en route* for Madras at about four in the afternoon. On this boat my cabin was on the port side, and as we were going due west at the time the sun beat into it all day long. The ship's boiler on the other side ensured that the atmosphere reached asphyxiation point, and so remained until the following morning.

There was practically no one with the exception of the Commission on the ship using the first-class or any other deck, which, except for our presence, appeared to be tenantless. But the Captain told me that in spite of appearances there were about 1,400 passengers on board besides ourselves. The first officer took me down to the lower decks one night on his rounds. It was a truly amazing sight that met my gaze—hundreds of Indians of all sorts and kinds and ages huddled together in a resigned comatose condition—little babies asleep in slings depending from the ceiling—the atmosphere indescribable.

CHAPTER IX

ON Monday, 18th February, we entered Madras Harbour. After disembarking we were ushered into a decorated goods shed where we were presented with a series of addresses beginning with that of the Corporation. It rained silver boxes. No hostile demonstrations of any kind had been allowed. Why this regulation had not been made everywhere throughout our tour will always remain a mystery to myself. Here in Madras it had the most instantaneous effect. Lord Goschen told me that the Madras Swarajists, aware of what had been arranged for in other provinces, applied to the Inspector-General of Police in the first instance to give them a "pitch" on our route so that they might demonstrate against us. The Inspector gave them short shrift, and they were so astonished at a little unexpected firmness that they offered to him their apologies. In the meantime the worst of the sedition-mongers were arrested. They had endeavoured to stir up agitation over

Lala Lajput Rai's death, but the men in the Madras streets had never heard of him, and accordingly remained unmoved by these efforts to commemorate his name and fame.

Lord Goschen had given the Swarajists leave to hold a meeting on the beach, which they advertised broadcast, but it had to be abandoned as no one attended. On the contrary, there was a great demonstration in our favour. Nowhere else were we accorded such a favourable reception, a circumstance which goes to prove how discriminating the Government of Madras was to adopt this attitude, and how much at fault the Government of India was to take up any other.

I was lodged with the Chief Secretary, Mr. Campbell, at his house on the Adyar River in a perfectly delightful situation, one of the genuine old-fashioned East India Company houses, rather gaunt in appearance and in not too good a state of repair, but by that none the less attractive. I could well imagine William Hickey and his circle in such surroundings. There is an old-world atmosphere about Madras and its environs that invests the whole with infinite charm.

I spent a quiet morning working. Late in the afternoon Mrs. Campbell took me down to the seashore, passing on the way Adyar

Samaj, where Mrs. Besant's particular sect has its being—an enormous property, its appointments somewhat resembling those of a University. The system appears to be of a very comprehensive character, including all sorts of places of worship and offering opportunities for the study of various philosophies. You pay your money and you can take your choice presumably. Mrs. Besant was not at that time taking a very prominent part against the Commission, although she had no scruple in deprecating our report before it was published or indeed composed. I understand that the reason for her refraining from adopting a militant attitude towards us was that she took exception to Motilal Nehru's adroit tactics in using Gandhi as a stalking horse. Whether she disapproved of Gandhi as a Holy Man I am not clear, but she certainly disapproved of him as a politician and said so. But there was method in Motilal Nehru's ingenious manœuvre notwithstanding her animadversions. When we were half-way through our tour it was quite clear that the worked-up enthusiasm against the Commission amongst the ignorant millions of India was very swiftly evaporating. More than nine-tenths of the population of British India had not the remotest conception as to

what the Royal Commission was concerned with and consequently remained indifferent. Something therefore had to be done to make it appear that the great mass of Indian people was becoming politically conscious.

Now the average villager had never heard of Nehru or of the Congress or of Sir John Simon, but they had all heard of Gandhi—for he was a holy man, report of whose sanctity had gone out into all the length and breadth of the land. Who then could rouse the pathetically contented Indian peasants against something they wot not of unless it was Gandhi himself? So Nehru went to Ahmedabad and induced the prophet to emerge once more from his temporary seclusion, with what result the whole world knows.

Our conferences started on 19th February in the Masonic Hall, which together with functions of all sorts and kinds that gave abundant proof of the friendliness of Madras, occupied all our available time on this our second visit to the Presidency. Among the usual subjects we discussed was the widening of the franchise. Even with our limited experience of the *mofussil* it was difficult not to be sceptical of the wisdom of allowing the franchise to anticipate education to any

appreciable extent. Later, when we were writing our report in London, I happened upon a passage in Lecky's *History of England* which appeared to me singularly apposite to the subject in hand. I reproduce it for the benefit of those who may be as much a prey to hesitation as I have been on this subject: "Politics would be unlike any other product of the human mind if it were not true that a high average of intelligence among the electors was necessary for a high average of intelligence among the representatives. If the predominating power of election be placed in the hands of the poorest and most ignorant classes of the community; if it be entrusted mainly to those who have no political knowledge, no real political opinions, no sense of political responsibility; if this great mass of elective incompetence be carefully sheltered from the influence of the more instructed classes, what can possibly be expected except the degradation of Parliament and the decay of the Empire? Nothing in the whole history of superstition is more grotesque than the doctrine that the panacea for parliamentary evils is to be found in lowering the suffrage, as though by some amazing process of political alchemy the ability and intelligence of the representative

body were likely to increase in direct proportion to the ignorance and incapacity of the elective body."

One morning I was perturbed to read a somewhat infelicitous article in the *Statesman* with reference to a recent meeting between the Viceroy and Gandhi at Mr. Patel's house in Delhi, the writer affirming that nobody now believed that any suggestions which the Simon Commission could make would result in a settlement, and that only a round table conference could be productive of any satisfactory result. This defeatist attitude seemed to me inopportune, especially as the tide was obviously setting in our favour. For the British Government now to repudiate the Royal Commission in view of everything that had happened since its first arrival in India would be the most humiliating surrender and quite unintelligible to Englishmen at home. I began to apprehend that there was some incipient notion in the Viceroy's mind of substituting, in response to the importunities of Congress, a round table conference for the original procedure which Parliament had intended should be pursued. If that was so, I was quite certain that it would meet with considerable opposition from those politicians in England who were not sufficiently

conciliatory to stand degradation at the hands of the Congress leaders, and who would unhesitatingly discountenance such a line of action. Sir John Simon, viewing this latest development in the situation with grave concern, sent a communication on the subject in the nature of a remonstrance to the Viceroy. I was convinced at that time that we had nothing to gain from any *rapprochement* with Motilal Nehru and his confederates, who, owing to a series of reverses, were already in a more chastened humour. From our point of view they were not to be trusted, nor was it possible to repose any confidence in their new-found zeal for compromise. The Commission was in a strong position *vis-à-vis* all this intriguing. I failed to see how the " Tadpoles and Tapers " were competent to assist us very appreciably in finding a way out of our difficulties. We had cause therefore for depression at this untoward turn of events.

Later there appeared announcements in various newspapers which seemed to confirm the report that the Viceroy had had some communication with Nehru and his associates. The mainspring of Lord Irwin's action was implicit faith in conciliation, and doubtless he felt that he should spare no effort consistent with this ideal. The Commission in

the meantime was endeavouring steadfastly to pursue its just occasions without prejudices or prepossessions and, as far as such an effort was possible in the East, to steer clear of intrigue. Sir John Simon was at his best when he was compelled to counteract anything of the sort, and we could always match him with confidence against the Congress leaders, who were by no means as astute as they were reputed to be. At the same time, I confess that their vagaries made our already complicated task none the easier of fulfilment.

While in Madras I took counsel with a member of the Executive on the two questions which I considered to be the most baffling of all those with which we were concerned: the reform of the Central Government and the Indianisation of the Services in the event of Provincial Autonomy being granted. He quite agreed with the theory that if the Provinces could be satisfied you might be able to effect a modification at the Centre which in certain quarters would be called reactionary. He suggested a single Chamber mainly elected by the Provincial Councils—this so as to pave the way for a true Federation. On the subject of the Indianisation of the Services his idea was that the Government of India should reserve

to itself certain areas such as the North-West Frontier Province, the railways, Assam, etc., where a reserve cadre of I.C.S. might be employed, and that these could be drawn upon when and if they were needed for any service in the Provinces. He also suggested that we had a safeguard in the personnel of the Army, which could also be drawn upon in the event of a crisis. I reserved to myself the right to disagree with any of these not very convincing proposals.

The Conference dragged on its weary length throughout our sojourn in Madras. The only variety to the eternal problems that were ever with us and never seemed any nearer solution was in the first place the case of the Coorgs, fine fellows evidently, who sent to us a deputation apparelled in dignified black robes with silver daggers at their side. They are allowed to carry arms always, despite the Arms Act, in token of their loyalty during the Mutiny.

On another day a very different deputation waited upon the Joint Conference from the extreme orthodox Brahmins. By this experience I received confirmation of all I had heard and read of the methods and traditions of this sacerdotal caste in the Madras Presidency. The views they set before us were of an

alarmingly reactionary and bigoted character. They would be content, we gathered, to see the reforms swept away altogether and, early in the proceedings, put in a plea most emphatically for early marriage, although how they associated such a subject with our terms of reference I was at a loss to understand. They explained that it was absolutely an essential inherent part of the Hindu religion. In the course of our interrogation of these witnesses Sir John Simon passed me a document in which their views were expressed even more frankly than in their speech. It was here stated that marriage should be consummated with young girls before they reached puberty, that the harm effected thereby was almost negligible compared with the hazards they alleged attended the postponement of the consummation of marriage to a more normal age. It is incredible that such a doctrine should still have any influence among civilized races. It was very amusing on this occasion to watch Sir A. P. Patro, a leader of the non-Brahmins, tackle these uncongenial witnesses, actuated evidently by intense antipathy towards themselves and their tenets. Sir John Simon sounded them on the subject of the Depressed Classes, but they gave the most evasive

answers, obviously entertaining no progressive views on their enfranchisement.

I had been much struck with the admirable physique of the coolie class in Madras, comparing so favourably with those in other parts of India, all the more so that this was the province where child marriage is said to be rife. It was explained to me, however, that child marriage is chiefly confined to the Brahmins and the higher castes. However that may be, the average coolie or agricultural peasant, soldier or policeman you see in Madras is of magnificent build and is even more aristocratic-looking than many who pride themselves on their antecedents. Most Hindu races are very handsome provided they live healthy lives, but in so many instances the richer classes seem to take little exercise and are not too careful of their diet, consuming a disproportionate amount of sugar, which must prove deleterious in such a climate.

On Sunday, 3rd March, we bade farewell to Lord and Lady Goschen, who had dispensed to us a wonderful hospitality in their sumptuous Government House with a succession of banquets and other entertainments, and had given us valuable assistance in every conceivable way. We had a long discussion

with His Excellency before we separated. Sir John Simon put various points for decision before him. The one which had exercised myself more than any other was the question of the position of the Services under Provincial Autonomy, which the Chairman had unaccountably omitted from the list of the subjects to be discussed on our return to Delhi. I was averse to the Commission endorsing any scheme for the reform of the constitution until the whole question of the Services was quite clearly defined. I refused to be content with the consideration that Provincial Governments will inevitably need Europeans in the Services and therefore will of their own volition retain a proportion of Europeans in the All India Services, which under a system of provincial autonomy would presumably be merged into the Provincial Services. The points to be insisted on are that for many years to come there must be a considerable leavening of Englishmen amongst the Governors in the Central Government, in the Secretariat, in the All India Services in the Provinces; and that all these Europeans must be of the right type. You will not secure the right type unless you make it quite clear in any written constitution that there is still the chance of a continuous

career for them once they have joined the Service. It would be of no avail relying upon Indian Ministers to continue appointing Europeans if the former were to have the control of the Services. There will be considerable difficulty experienced over this matter, as I doubt whether Indians sufficiently realize they cannot dispense with the British element for many years to come, whatever the form of the constitution might be.

Throughout our tour of inspection in up-country districts no problem exercised our minds and caused us more anxiety than the situation of the All India Service in the event of a decision being arrived at to transfer to Ministers in the Provincial Governments all those provincial subjects which at the present time remain reserved. Of the former All India Services, excluding the I.M.S., only those which deal wholly or mainly with the reserved field of administration continue to be recruited and controlled by the Secretary of State in Council. But it is conceivable that, if in the Provinces a unitary form of government is set up, the Services in their entirety might pass under the control of Ministers and would become for all material purposes provincialized. That was certainly the view of the Lee Commission, and, if this

assumption is correct, the implication of the change I have indicated is that recruiting for the All India Services on the old basis, that is, under the control of the Secretary of State in Council, would come automatically to an end. Those recruited on the old basis and remaining on in the Service after it had become provincialized, would, it is true, be guaranteed in all their existing and accruing rights or receive due compensation for the loss of any of them, but these concessions, valuable as they are for the individual concerned, in no way affect the main issue. The problem we were confronted with was how to secure the continuance of a strong European element in the provincialized services in the event of provincial autonomy being granted with the revision of the constitution.

The question, one of the most vital we had to consider, was whether it was possible to run so grave a risk as to delegate control of the Security Services to local governments without reserving a power to ensure that a certain definite proportion of European officers sufficient to uphold the existing standards of efficiency must be retained in those services. The closing down of recruitment on the old basis would surely leave to the Provincial

Government the option to Indianise the provincial services completely within a no very considerable period of time, unless there was some special reservation clearly and definitely contained in the Government of India Act, and the effect of this would be that the provincial services would come to be more and more recruited from the class of those that now enter the subordinate services.

The general impression I carried away with me as a result of listening to a very great deal of evidence on the subject all over India was that it was absolutely essential not only to retain a considerable European element of the right quality (quality is as important in this connection as quantity) in the event of the establishment of unitary Government in the Provinces, but that it would have to be retained in the provincialized services for a considerable time to come. The evidence which was adduced at our Conferences of the corruption rife in the provincialized services, the difficulty of the conduct of departments being unprejudiced by communal predilections, the inadaptability of the Indian to certain services, and the repugnance that so many Indians at present have for responsibility when it devolves upon them, confirmed me in the opinion that provincial

autonomy was too hazardous an experiment unless we ensured that in the weak places of the new structure the " steel frame " could still offer its support. It seemed to me essential that the high standards of efficiency to which India has become accustomed must be maintained. Although self-government may be better than good government, there are limits beyond which this questionable aphorism should not be strained.

When the Lee Commission suggested the experiment of allowing responsible Ministers to organize their own services, a hope was expressed that this reform would not involve the complete cessation of European recruitment. It was understood that in some provinces the local Governments would endeavour to obtain a substantial proportion of European recruits for certain services obviously requiring a European reinforcement —but " hopes " and " endeavours " by themselves will certainly not attract the right type of recruit to the All India Services—and this is not the least important aspect of the case. A European element not up to the high standard familiar to Indians for at least a hundred years might be more detrimental than complete Indianisation. My contention was that if we were to ensure the right amount

and the right quality of drafts into the Service our recommendations must be definite and unequivocal. Even if there was no constitutional difficulty in providing that the Secretary of State should continue to prescribe the strength of the European element and the conditions of service, we must make certain that such a provision will ensure conditions attractive to the right type of individual into the Service.

I observed, during our tour of the Provinces, that Indian witnesses had, in many cases, adopted the line that not only would they be prepared to retain, of their own volition, an appreciable leaven of Europeans, which pious view, without any definite guarantee that it would be implemented, was in my opinion valueless, but they had also suggested that there should be some reserve of European officers upon whom they could draw in the event of any of the provincialized services requiring such reinforcement. In Madras that proposition was followed up by the Chief Secretary and I think by one other European official, who sketched out a plan by which the Central Government would train European officials in certain central spheres such as the North-West Frontier Province, the Backward Tracts, the Railways, etc., and this

cadre could be drawn upon by the Provinces when required. I should have thought that such a proposal was open to very obvious objections. These officers would be quite unfamiliar with conditions prevailing in the Provinces or the work which the former All India Service officers used to perform in those provinces. There would presumably be no one to take the places they vacated and there would be no guarantee that they would have a normal career open to them in the Provinces to which they were called. It seemed to me to be a proposal not worth while canvassing.

It was essential for us to determine at what point was the experiment of " provincial autonomy " most likely to break down. Any breakdown that might occur would in all probability be due to those inherent defects of an Indianised Service, lack of experience, lack of impartiality and lack of any sense of responsibility which must characterize it for many years to come, if we could attach any importance to the evidence we had heard all over India.

The Governor's safeguards would presumably operate only when a breakdown had occurred. Surely it is more important that a breakdown should be avoided. The retention of a strong European element in the All

Indian Services functioning in the Provinces would be the most reliable and the most valuable safeguard against any clogging of the machinery.

Among the general powers of superintendence and control belonging to the Secretary of State is included the power to make rules for regulating the classification of the Civil Services in India, but it seemed to me problematical as to whether that power would prove a sufficient instrument to ensure that there shall be for some time to come a considerable European element of the best type in the Provinces, supposing a unitary form of government to be set up therein. In other words, it would hardly offer sufficient reassurance for the hesitating I.C.S. candidate to be told that the Secretary of State still has the superintendence and control of the Service, and it would be conceivable that the entrant might say to himself that there was nothing to prevent the Secretary of State at any moment relaxing that control and giving it over to the Ministers in the Provinces. It was very essential, in my opinion, that any suggestion we made should provide a very definite safeguard for European members of the All India Services both for the present and for the future.

One of the Ministers in Delhi in his evidence gave the following opinion on the subject: "I think that for quite a considerable time the Secretary of State must maintain his control over the conditions of service in the two most important administrative services in the country. My own view is that the large measure of success which has attended the working of the reformed system of government in the past ten years has been due in one important particular at any rate, to the existence of a really efficient administrative machinery. It is a system which has been of invaluable assistance to the ministers in the provinces in carrying out their share of the administration."

What is to ensure that the Secretary of State shall for "quite a considerable time" maintain his control over the conditions of service? Our ultimate recommendation was that as regards the Civil Services of India the Security Services should continue to be recruited as All India Services by the Secretary of State, and their existing rights should be retained.

Hitherto I have examined the question from the point of view of the advantage that a strong European element in the services confers upon the provincial administration,

but there is another consideration which is wellnigh as important. It is surely unthinkable that for many years to come there will not be a considerable European element both in the Central Executive, the Central Legislature, the Secretariat and among the Governors of Provinces. Where is such an element to be recruited if the Provincial cadres become Indianised?

But whatever conclusions we arrive at we cannot leave out of account one important consideration. I think it is common ground that provincial autonomy could not be conceded without any definite safeguards. But already there will be some justifiable complaint among Indians that we are taking away with one hand what we are giving with the other, and if it is laid down that a strong European element must be retained in the Provinces outside the control of the Minister, the question will doubtless be asked as to what value there is in autonomy of such a kind. Undoubtedly we run the risk on this account of antagonizing those upon whose co-operation we can now rely, but we have to face that danger. It is a grave risk, but it is not so grave a risk as handing over the services to the unlimited control of Indians under existing conditions. The real truth of the matter

is that Edwin Montagu began at the wrong end. His ambition was to give responsible government as soon as possible to a people who, with infinitesimal exceptions, had never been trained in responsibility of any kind, who had never served their apprenticeship even in the less important spheres of administration. The right course surely would have been to start tentatively with the Indianisation of the bureaucracy. Then we should have been furnished with some sort of test as to whether and at what point Indians were fitted to govern themselves. But it is obviously too late to concern ourselves with what might have been. What in all probability *will be* rather claimed our exclusive attention, and I for one refuse to contemplate with equanimity a completely Indianised Civil Service under conditions which are not likely to undergo any substantial change for some generations. I may be " pushing at an open door," but I hope the door will remain open for some time to come.

In any suggestions we had to make in our report on this vital question we could not be oblivious to the fact that we are the trustees of over two hundred million Indians who have never heard of the Montagu-

Chelmsford Reforms or of the Simon Commission—but who will be the first to suffer and who stand to suffer most by any breakdown of the constitutional machine.

I have made a long digression for the purpose of laying stress upon a matter which is of paramount and vital importance to India, although during the subsequent sessions of the Round Table Conference it seems to have been relegated for the time being into the background.

CHAPTER X

ARRANGEMENTS had been made that the Commission should visit an Indian State, and Mysore had been selected for this purpose. As I had accompanied Lord Hardinge on his viceregal tour through Mysore some years previously and as the programme selected would have entailed my visiting all the same localities and institutions I had already seen, I took advantage of an invitation from Nawab Wali ud Doula, cousin of the Nizam, a former schoolfellow, to stay with him in the State of Hyderabad. For about a week I received boundless hospitality at his hands, seeing something of Hyderabad City and the surrounding country, besides hunting and shooting, and camping in the heart of the jungle in the eastern district of the State near Singerani, which occupations presented a welcome contrast to the labours of the Commission. On my return to Singerani I found that the Hyderabad Government had provided me with every facility and in particular a special coach which had been run into a

siding for the night and which I used as an hotel. On the following morning it was connected with the train bound for Dornakal, which station I reached at about three o'clock in the morning of 13th March. Here I had what seemed an interminable wait until the Commission special steamed in about one o'clock in the afternoon. We spent the rest of the day wending our way up through the Nizam's dominions towards the Central Provinces.

On the following morning we arrived at Nagpur. A large crowd of black flaggers—but not nearly so large as we had anticipated—had been allowed to congregate and insult the King-Emperor and the British Parliament by permission of someone in authority who lacked any sense of discrimination. In contrast to this unaccountable want of judgment on the part of officialdom, the non-co-operating Ministers of the Central Provinces, I must admit, set a much better example. Although declining any association with us they had refused to join in these vulgar demonstrations and with commendable dignity and discretion merely absented themselves from the town during our visit. Their behaviour seemed to us in happy contrast to Nehru and his fellow-conspirators. After all, nobody can be

blamed for their opinions, but they can be blamed for disorderly and unmannerly behaviour, although these offences were apparently condoned by the Government of India.

It would have been unreasonable to have hoped to profit very considerably by our visit to the Central Provinces. As it was the only Provincial Legislature that had declined to assist us, the amount of evidence and memoranda supplied to the Commission was exiguous, but it was sufficient to indicate how deplorably backward the Province was and even to suggest to us the possibility of its partition amongst neighbouring provinces. It was a curious circumstance, although it may have been due to cause and effect, that the Province which of all others was least fit to be given any appreciable measure of advance in constitutional reform should have been alone in refusing to co-operate with the Royal Commission.

Sir Montagu Butler, at that time Governor of the Central Provinces, gave us the benefit of his valuable advice, founded as it was upon a wide experience. Like the other Governors, he gave us his views with an all too modest caution and reserve.

On 16th March we had our final Provincial

Conference in Government House, heartily thankful to feel that our itinerant task was definitely completed—and in the evening we took our departure for Delhi.

I have described in what may have appeared to some readers too trivial or insignificant detail the great journeyings through the nine Provinces undertaken by the Royal Commission. While having no pretensions to any descriptive powers, I have notwithstanding deliberately in my narrative entered into this detail actuated by a very definite purpose. I have been anxious to convey by every means possible to those impartial students of this great problem the paramount importance of co-relating a reformed constitution to realities, and have therefore endeavoured to present a picture of the India that we saw in contradistinction to that figment of the imagination which most Indian and some English politicians would have us recognize as the real India. I myself am convinced that the main hindrance to an agreed solution of the constitutional problem is not so much racial antipathy or any of the other factors which subsequently embarrassed the Round Table Conference, as the refusal of Indians to face facts and realities. No one can begin to

appreciate the problem in all its bearings until he has had the experience that fell to the Royal Commission of travelling through the length and breadth of the land and so gaining to some extent a true estimate of the condition, physical, moral and intellectual, of its numerous populations. There is no magic in a constitutional formula, and until the leaders of the Indian intelligentsia give some more convincing testimony than they have hitherto that they appreciate the exigencies of the situation, either no settlement is possible or whatever settlement is arrived at will be entirely inappropriate to the circumstances of their native land.

CHAPTER XI

OUR object in returning to Delhi was to spend some three weeks in quiet conference with the Viceroy, Ministers and others, drawing as it were the loose ends together, subjecting the evidence we had collected to a winnowing process and reducing to concrete form our opinions founded upon the accumulated impressions we had obtained as a result of our travels and conferences. We had in the nature of things by this time begun to form some definite ideas which could provide a framework for our report, but the amount of tangible help in the way of suggestions from witnesses or from voluminous memoranda supplied to us during our tour was not proportionate to the time and labour involved. I cannot resist the conclusion, moreover, that, even if we had received the co-operation of those who had deliberately withheld it, we should not have been any the better off. To judge by all that they had said and written, the Swarajists were conspicuously barren in constructive ideas.

We had an oppressively hot journey to Delhi—one of the worst we had experienced on our travels. The reason we felt the temperature so severely on this occasion was that the train was under orders to modify its customary speed so as to time itself for an early morning arrival. As a result we were constrained to halt perpetually on arid plains in the full heat of midday until the interior atmosphere of the carriages became intolerable. The country traversed by this stretch of line, which presented so vernal an appearance earlier in our tour, was now all burnt up and the jungle was leafless. It was a grateful contrast when the sun set and we were able to open all the windows and to breathe an air freshened by evening dew and the cool approach of night.

On 18th March we arrived in Delhi town station. Not one murmur of "Simon, go back" greeted us anywhere. When we emerged into the streets we found them bristling with troops, police and even armoured cars. Delhi could not complain of this disconcerting martial display in virtue of the reprehensible scenes which characterized our previous arrival. I again partook of Sir James Crerar's hospitality. On this occasion we at last found time to read blue books

and indulge in undisturbed confidential talks with those whose opinion and advice we valued. The incessant strain and fatigue to which we had been exposed during our tour made a sojourn of three weeks in the same place a relief for which we were all devoutly grateful.

We continued to hold conferences in rooms allocated to us in the Parliament Building in New Delhi. The question of defence was one which occupied much of our time. On one occasion two of our Indian colleagues broke forth into diatribes against what they alleged to be our lack of sincerity over the Indianisation of the Army, obviously confusing two issues, the question of the Indianisation of the officer ranks of the Indian Army and the question of the retention of the British Army under an Indian Minister of Defence. The Pundit Nehru and his associates, it must be remembered, were in somewhat of a dilemma over this dual problem, seeing that although in public they were constrained to protest that Indians were quite capable of defending themselves, that it was only the British raj which hindered the complete Indianisation of the Indian Army, and that once having accomplished this transformation they could dispense with the British Forces, in secret

they are averse to any such policy, as they are fully aware that if the British Forces were withdrawn the Congress leaders would in all probability suffer extermination either metaphorically or physically by the martial races of India.

Our two Indian colleagues, however, feigned surprise that, to use their own words, " out of 350 million persons you cannot find sufficient young Indians competent and capable of being made officers." The approximately correct total of the population is not 350 but 260 millions. Of these 260 millions I presume 230 millions are agricultural peasants that not even the Congress leaders would insinuate were capable of receiving the King's commission. Of the remaining 30 millions presumably 15 millions at the lowest estimate are women. Of the remaining 15 millions quite 7 millions would not be of serving age, and of the remaining 8 millions not a quarter would pass the medical tests. Of the remaining 2 millions at least a million and a half would not be well enough educated in any sense. Of the remaining half-million very few would have the smallest ambition to serve in the Army. I doubt if more than 150 individuals all told would be available for officers' commissions, of whom only a small

fraction—if we are to judge by present standards and present results—would survive Sandhurst, Woolwich or Cranwell. It can therefore be argued justifiably that the making of an Indian Officer Class in India is destined to be a very lengthy and very problematic process.

On the 25th March I transferred my residence at the invitation of Lord Irwin to the Viceregal Lodge where I found myself accommodated in the luxurious garden pavilion built, I believe, originally for the Prince of Wales, the rooms of which are ranged round an open courtyard where a fountain played day and night, the plash of the water providing a particularly soothing effect at a time of year when Delhi is getting too warm to be pleasant. Sir Francis Humphreys, fresh from his heroic adventures in Kabul, shared this ideal retreat with me, and it was an exceptional privilege to be able in spare moments to sit and listen to his descriptions of the stirring episode in which he had taken so valiant a part.

During this visit we endeavoured to obtain official views on the vexed question of the Central Government. The opposition to dyarchy at the Centre was unanimous, but support was given to ministerial responsibility

to the Legislature, although the scheme was left somewhat vague and indefinite. The Viceroy's preoccupation at the moment seemed to be to create a more propitious atmosphere. Lord Irwin has been much taken to task in various organs of the British Press for pursuing the policy of conciliation. But it is difficult to appreciate how under the circumstances any other course was open to him. Whatever failure has attended that policy is not to be laid to his charge. Had the Liberals and the Congressmen met Lord Irwin in the first instance the whole history of the subsequent three years would have been different. Nothing indicates more completely the utter lack of foresight, wisdom and statesmanship displayed by the Swaraj leaders than their refusal to respond to Lord Irwin's appeal.

The Viceroy and Sir John Simon were now concerting a plan together by which it was arranged that the latter, in the name of the Commission, should address a letter to the Prime Minister suggesting that it would not be without the terms of our reference if we opened up the whole question of the bearing of the reforms upon the situation of the Indian Princes. This course would, so they argued, place the whole matter on a wider basis, and

might have the additional merit of giving an opportunity for men of the type of Sir Tej Sapru to co-operate at something in the nature of a round table conference. I was not quite sure that I fully appreciated all the bearings of this novel idea upon the status of the Royal Commission. In case I might be accused of " talking after the event," I prefer to quote passages on the subject from my diary, which was written at the time that these new conceptions, so pregnant with effect upon our fortunes, were developing, and which indicate that wrong as I may have been as to the ultimate failure of the plan, I was correct in my apprehensions on our own account.

"I very much doubt this plan working. The Swaraj Press will see through it at once and say it is the supersession of the Simon Commission. I am absolutely obdurate on that point. Whatever happens the Statutory Commission must in no way be prejudiced. But I can see by the Viceroy's tone and the bearing of his remarks that he is going to do all he can to make the way easy for Nehru, Jinnah and Malaviya and the Swaraj Party to come back into the fold. I myself believe we are not likely to do ourselves any good by any communication with them. I may be wrong. . . ."

" The game he (Jinnah) has been playing all this last year of trying to force the Moslems to join with the Congress Party has failed. He now comes forward with much the same scheme the Viceroy has suggested and says a number of non-co-operators will come in if that is the theme of our report. My comment is that I suppose we shall be compelled to make every sort of concession in order to save their faces."

It was now necessary for us to deliberate on the subject of these new developments, which were causing us the liveliest concern. We had been informed from a certain authoritative quarter that the Congress leaders were in a real *impasse*, and would make any terms to disentangle themselves from the humiliating position in which, thanks to their discreditable tactics and Gandhi's preaching, they now found themselves. A suggestion had been recently made that a certain intermediary who took no active part in politics, but was personally acquainted with Nehru and his subalterns, should endeavour to arrange contact between the Congress leaders and the Viceroy. The same authority supplied the information that Nehru would be prepared to come to London if he could do so " with honour," and that although

he would have no intercourse whatever with the Commission, he might condescend to confer with a Joint Parliamentary Committee. The Viceroy asked me for my views. I replied that in the first place I did not understand what Nehru's expression "with honour" signified. In my opinion Nehru had committed himself much too far in his insults to the Commission to climb down sufficiently to satisfy our requirements, and that any negotiations which were not on the basis of the Commission's report would be inexpedient. I had been definitely made to understand that there could be no question of opening these negotiations on any other basis. At the same time I conceded to him that as a result of my conversations with those who were thoroughly acquainted with public opinion all over India, that there was imminent risk of a critical situation, thanks to the preaching of the extremists who care for nothing but the advancement of their own scheme of reform, and would risk the fate of millions in its achievement, and therefore that anything that could be done to change the atmosphere and to obviate so great a peril should be attempted—but I took care not to welcome unreservedly the idea of at once parleying with the enemy

just because some busybodies were suggesting such a course as expedient. The Swarajists wanted a repetition of the Irish crisis, but Nehru was not even in the position that Michael Collins manœuvred himself into, and I failed to see why we should help him to it. More than ever was I convinced that firmness was necessary. Parleying might be taken as a sign of weakness, and therein lay the danger.

Lord Irwin was most solicitous, at this juncture, to do nothing which might appear that he was going behind the backs of the Commission. For my own part, I calculated that so much had already been done and said to the detriment of the Commission, it was of little consequence; but what did matter was the truth, and if the truth was that there was any contemplation of setting the Commission at naught, then I could only deprecate his making any efforts at conciliation. I concluded that there was no such intention.

Later I had a conversation with Sir John Simon and gathered from him that he had not given the Viceroy too much encouragement, which was probably the safest attitude for him to have adopted in view of the fact that these extremists who were now professing

a changed view were obstructive, and nothing but complete defeat would make them anything else. It was only because the Moslems had definitely broken from them and because the Commission had not failed in the manner anticipated that they were now beginning to display contrition.

At this time an article appeared in the *Pioneer* headed "Viceregal Conversations," rather approving of Lord Irwin's parleying with the Congress leaders, suggesting that the latter should go to London and confer with the Cabinet, and definitely advocating that the Simon Commission should be entirely ignored.

I wrote out an appreciation for the Viceroy of the suggestions made to him with regard to parleys with the enemy and also on the suggestions published in the *Pioneer*. I was influenced by two considerations not easy to reconcile, the first that I had the gravest misgivings about the situation which might be created if there was no give and take on either side, and secondly, that if there was any idea of parleying with Nehru's party the basis of any subsequent conference must be our report. The Swarajists only represented one section of the community, and therefore were not in a position either to demand or

to expect any flouting of the Commission. I further urged the fact that Nehru had been very adroit in visiting upon our heads every form of ignominy in the streets all over India, which proceeding undoubtedly had prejudiced our position temporarily at least, but that now an opportunity had conveniently presented itself to reinstate the Commission in the estimation of the Indian populace, and in the face of those who affected to regard us as nothing more authoritative than a travelling circus. The Imperial Parliament could not afford to capitulate to forces of sedition and disorder, especially as there was not any very apparent need to do so. It was difficult therefore to resist the conclusion that although it was the obvious duty of those who influence events in India to do all they could to conciliate as many different schools of thought as possible, the limit to such an endeavour must come at the point where the Imperial Parliament is asked to subordinate its own authority to those who have no constitutional position whatsoever. Finally, I insisted that public opinion at home would not tolerate such a suggestion as was made in the *Pioneer*—public opinion in England being not at all favourable to the Congress leaders.

But there was much that gave us occasion for misgiving in all that was going on behind the scenes. If only we were able to produce a report which would appeal favourably to the Provinces there was nothing much to be feared, and therefore it might be premature to expend any ingenuity in endeavouring to conciliate those who, although they might still be in a strong position, might be constrained to abandon it if our report found favour in any direction.

A day or two later the Commission received some enlightenment as to the progress of events, and were informed that an intermediary had been in communication with the leading non-co-operators. Apparently one of their number, to whom the Viceroy had accorded an interview, so far gave proof of the confidence which had been reposed in him as to communicate the Viceroy's views to the Editor of the *Pioneer*, with the result that the article I have previously referred to appeared on the following day. Thereupon the Viceroy declined to see him again as a protest against such unwarranted indiscretion, but suggested that he might now enter into communication with Sir John Simon.

As to the Pundit Motilal Nehru, he was

evidently more than discomfited at this juncture as he told the intermediary that if only he could make the announcement to his people that Parliament would grant "dominion status" he would give way about the Services and everything else. He declined to go to London without this assurance, but as nobody knew what was meant by "dominion status," and as the Commission declined to commit itself to any catch-phrase of this description, even his own friends doubted the wisdom of his obduracy.

I was anxious to receive a quite definite assurance that there was no idea of implementing the suggestion in the *Pioneer* that the Royal Commission should be ignored, and I expressed the view very forcibly that if there was anything done derogatory to the status of the Royal Commission it would have untoward reactions at home. We were not unmindful that Nehru had delivered himself of a very injudicious speech to the Empire Parliamentary Association when he was in England during the previous year, which had antagonized all parties, and except for a few cranks without any influence on public opinion, he had no friends or following whatever in England, and therefore he was not in a position to dictate

to the Imperial Parliament, a course which public opinion at home would not tolerate for one moment. On one occasion the Viceroy observed to me, "I wonder why these people commit themselves so far." I ventured to suggest it was because they never addressed any meetings save those exclusively composed of their own supporters. They never hear the other side of the argument, and so get carried away by the "exuberance of their own verbosity," to which there is no effective antidote.

On 4th April we held a final Conference with all our collaborators in the Princes' Chamber, in the course of which Sir John Simon delivered himself of one of those speeches which should have had a very much wider audience, indicating the extreme difficulties of constitution-making in India as compared with the same process in our other dependencies. To judge by their memoranda the Provinces hardly seemed aware of these complexities. The first step towards a solution of the Indian problem is that Indians themselves should thoroughly appreciate the formidable obstacles that confront all those upon whom the duty of endeavouring to surmount them has been imposed.

Our task in India was now complete, but as we were not due to leave for home for another ten days, and as the heat in Delhi was becoming oppressive, I asked for leave of absence to retrace my steps to the North-West Frontier. I left accordingly with a companion for Peshawar, where we arrived on 6th April, putting up at an hotel where my bedroom resembled a prison cell. After breakfast we called upon the Commandant of the North-West Frontier Constabulary who offered to take us up into the Kohat Pass. Accordingly we motored across the intervening plain, passing *en route* typical fortified constabulary posts, and then entered tribal territory, where we met a number of Afridi tribesmen on the road carrying rifles and presenting a very warlike appearance. There was, in fact, a miniature campaign in progress between Shias and Sunnis in the hills above Kohat. We motored to the top of the pass, from which point of vantage we gained an extensive view of this bleak frowning landscape. One of the Commandant's sergeants met us at the Fort and explained how only a few days before he had held up three Waziris who were " gun running," and how, having killed one of them, he had forced the other two to surrender. The Commandant

pointed out to me the village in the valley below where Ajub, the murderer of Mrs. Ellis, used to live. The assassin, who was still at large, himself had brought Mrs. Ellis's daughter after the tragedy through the valley to some place above in the hills, where she was subsequently rescued. On our way back through the defile we met another detachment of tribesmen marching forth to war with standards flying, a man dancing in front of them to the music of tom-toms and other strange kinds of music. They looked picturesque enough, winding their way along the road up the pass, the valley echoing to their war-songs. The Commandant, who appeared to be on excellent terms with these filibusters, exchanged good-tempered badinage with them. I understand they have very few casualties in these campaigns.

We tarried awhile at a small village to visit a rifle factory which, much to my surprise, has the sanction of authority. The method of manufacture was unconventional. These native craftsmen appeared to be fashioning lethal weapons out of iron railings. A number of Waziris, the wildest-looking men imaginable, were buying them, and seemed satisfied as to their adequacy for the purpose for which they were intended.

On the following day we started off for the Malakand, encountering on the road innumerable Pathan caravans coming into Peshawar from Nowshera, which we reached in about an hour's time. Here we turned left-handed, crossed the Indus by a bridge of boats and then called on the Colonel of the 15th Hussars at Raisalpur, a large military cantonment on beyond the river, drank excellent beer, and proceeded on our journey, which was monotonous enough until we began to ascend into the hills. Once through Dargai the route is most sensational, consisting as it does of perpetual sharp twists and bends up an extremely precipitous face. Malakand itself, which is little but a fort and a market-place, is in a magnificent situation perched on the summit of a pass with a comprehensive view of India's natural barrier. The High Commissioner of the North-West Frontier Province, Sir Norman Bolton, had kindly asked us to lunch with him that day at a place called Ahmenderra, down in the Swat valley on the other side of the pass—in a delightful rest-house built on a high rock one or two hundred feet above some extensive irrigation works. In the afternoon we sat out in the veranda admiring the lovely view, Lady Bolton pointing out the battlefield near

Chak Darra, where the Malakand Field Force wiped out the enemy in an engagement which incidentally helped to make the early fame of Mr. Winston Churchill. I returned to Peshawar in the evening and dined with the head of the R.A.M.C., Colonel Brierly, and met various officials, who one and all seemed to take the keenest delight in their exacting work on the Frontier. There seems to be quite a different spirit prevailing up in this part of India than is to be found in the plains. The exigencies of a frontier post of such supreme and vital importance in the nature of things ensures that only the best qualified are appointed to such responsibility and that only those capable of enduring it can survive.

On the following morning, 8th April, I started from Peshawar in my car. Passing through Nowshera we pursued our way for some distance along a very smiling valley, but as we neared Attock the scenery became more wild and desolate. We crossed the Indus by the great bridge, which has a causeway constructed under the railway track for motors. For the next few hours we continually ascended—a very beautiful run through the Hazara district until we reached Abbotabad, a cheerful-looking garrison town on the top

of a pass, fir-trees everywhere, the gardens bright with irises and roses in full bloom. I found a pleasant inn not unlike the Scotch variety, where I was provided with a sufficient midday meal. We resumed our journey in the afternoon, through an undulating country, and eventually fetched up at a small picturesque township, Munsehra by name, where there is one of the most delightful dak bungalows I have ever occupied, situated on a ledge of rock overlooking a wide-spreading valley, a range of impressive snow mountains forming the background of a magnificent panorama. Here I spent a comfortable night in a very clean bedroom. A gale had sprung up, but it had subsided by the morning, which was clear and cloudless, so at eight-thirty we started for Srinagar. The first part of the journey as far as the Kashmir frontier was very beautiful and varied. Near Domel we entered the wonderful ravine of the Jhelum River. My car now began to show unmistakable signs of distress, which caused me some anxiety, as I had not allowed myself too much time to complete this tour and catch the train at Pindi for Bombay, but the chauffeur succeeded eventually in putting things to rights.

There is a great deal of traffic along the

road through the Jhelum valley, which skirts the edge of a stupendous precipice about half-way up the mountain-side, twisting and turning in the most unexpected fashion, while the river roars and thunders hundreds of feet below. My driver, although obviously an experienced hand at the game, took a great many chances round these sharp corners and we nearly experienced one bad collision. The scenery, magnificent as it is, soon palls, as it is practically identical for a hundred miles, and it was not until we came within measurable distance of Srinagar that the aspect of the country changed and we entered a more smiling valley—the river wider and less turbulent, extensive meadows on either side with apple and almond trees growing everywhere in profusion, covered with blossom, the air fresh and delicious. Then for 30 miles we proceeded along a road edged with Lombardy poplars, which are ubiquitous in the neighbourhood of Srinagar. The mountain ranges on all sides are of graceful contour, the atmosphere and colouring brilliant—but I was disappointed with the town itself, the old part of which, built mainly of wood on innumerable backwaters, is quaint but filthy, while the inhabitants look absolutely miserable in rags and tatters, half-starved for the

most part. Nothing of its aspect or characteristics in any way seemed to account for Kashmiri song or legend. I walked up on to a hill to obtain a more comprehensive view of the whole city, but still I was not very much impressed after all I had read and heard described. I went to see the much-talked-of house-boats of which there are fleets moored in squalid little backwaters. I was very anxious to buy some of the beautiful Kashmir stones, but the jewellers' shops were so surrounded by importunate touts who far from acting as an additional enticement to purchase merely served as a warning, which I for one accepted.

On the following day I motored from Srinagar to Rawal Pindi, the best part of 200 miles. The atmosphere was at first bitterly cold, the wind blowing ruthlessly straight off the snow mountains above Galmarg. For about 80 miles we were merely retracing our steps, and by the time we turned off out of the Jhelum valley I had had a surfeit of precipices, ravines and torrents. I lunched at a small fly-blown dak bungalow at Barsala which is precariously situated on a natural platform almost overhanging the boiling river, pinnacles of rock soaring up to the skyline on every side. For the next 40 miles we

were perpetually on a very steep ascent until we came in sight of Murree. A terrific thunderstorm was breaking in the valley below us while we were bathed in sunshine. The road runs through magnificent woods of blue pine, spruce and silver fir, which sweetened the air with a delicious fragrance. There are countless sawmills by the roadside and the pungent scent of cedar-wood pervades the whole atmosphere. I can well appreciate what a divine contrast it must present to the Government official when he comes up out of the burning plain into such air and scenery, bringing relief to his frayed nerves and reviving memories of his far-away homeland. Murree in the distance looked most attractive perched on the top of a pine-clad hill, but on closer inspection it was disappointing. The rest of the way down to Rawal Pindi was the most delectable experience of the journey—an excellent road through pine-woods, perfectly lovely scenery, all the more lovely because the setting sun was painting the jagged crests of the hills with indescribable colouring, and nearly all the way the air was laden with the exquisite perfume of acacia blossom. I reached Rawal Pindi at about seven o'clock in the evening, where I found one or two other members of the Royal Commis-

sion. I was not reluctant to be quit of the car, having motored 700 miles in the five days.

I spent the morning of 11th April restfully and at four o'clock in the afternoon entrained in a coach which had been detached from our special in order to avoid changing at Delhi, where we arrived on the 12th. Here on the platform we found Sir John Simon and the remainder of the Commission and the staff, together with Government officials, and various Indians who covered us with golden garlands. We heard details of the bomb episode in the Legislative Assembly from eye-witnesses. I was told that after the House had adjourned, the various party leaders at once took counsel together to decide upon the wording of the resolution in connection with the outrage to be moved when the House met again, and they, according to this account, drafted some words to the effect that members of all parties were horrified at the occurrence, to which exception was taken by one of the extremists, who, while admitting that the wording would have been suitable enough had any of his own party suffered extinction at the hands of the would-be assassin, was not prepared, under the circumstances, to endorse so emphatic a

denunciation of the crime. Some one thereupon suggested a more non-committal form of words in which the House might thank God for its deliverance. But this alternative failed to find any favour, and therefore, despairing of any compromise, an appeal was made to Malaviya, a Hindu whose more orthodox proclivities ensured sympathy with any pious professions that might be delivered, and with his aid was drafted some form of words appropriate to the occasion.

We had a fairly cool journey to Bombay, which we reached on 13th April, although we had to pay for a milder temperature with the experience of a devastating dust-storm which blew some of its contents into our carriages. Apart from this additional discomfort I had become so weary of train travelling that I felt I could not endure another day of it, although on this occasion I was buoyed up with the consoling reflection that in a few hours' time we were due to sail on our homeward journey. We arrived by the coast route—no demonstrations of any sort along the line. The demonstrators were probably by this time as weary of us as we were of them.

Our train drew up at Ballards Quay, where we found cars from Government House

waiting for us. We accordingly proceeded to Malabar Point to pay our respects to the newly-arrived Governor Sir Frederick Sykes, then returned to the quay, and after a farewell function in an improvised hall of ceremony boarded the *Ranpura*. It was with a sigh of gratitude and relief that we crossed the gangway. As the boat drew away I watched the shore receding until it was lost to sight in the heat haze, and I thought of the evening six very long months ago when we weighed anchor with all our arduous and responsible work in front of us.

The retrospect of our experiences aroused in my mind very mixed feelings. I was returning home with an abiding affection for India and its peoples, and on that account with an intense anxiety that the result of any recommendations we might make would prove a real contribution towards a satisfactory solution of the stupendous problem that faces British and Indian statesmen alike —but with equally intense misgivings that the conflicting interests that were revealed to us at every turn would prove incapable of adjustment whatever schemes the wit of man could devise, however much ingenuity could be exercised thereon. Events, more-

over, had taken a turn which indicated all too clearly that even before we had set the coping stone on our work the whole building would be rejected.

CHAPTER XII

WE had an uneventful journey back to England, arriving in London on 28th April. Our special saloon carriage was detached just before we reached Victoria Station and it was then drawn up opposite the royal waiting-room where, as on the occasion of our departure, a number of Cabinet Ministers, officials and Indians greeted us. A large crowd had assembled outside the terminus, not with any intention of doing us honour but rather of witnessing a promised demonstration by hostile Indian students that was successfully frustrated, thanks to the common sense of the London police authorities.

There was to be no respite for those members of the Commission who were also members of the House of Commons, for we were at once plunged into the turmoil of a General Election. The possibility that we might not all retain our seats gave me the utmost concern, as under such circumstances it would have at once been said by Indians that it

was nothing short of an insult that those who were rejected by their own countrymen should be the appointed arbiters of India's destinies. However, it so happened that we were all returned. My own constituents were most conspicuously loyal and I found myself one of the few Conservatives who at this election increased his majority.

But it was obvious that the change of Government was bound to have some effect upon the fortunes of the Commission. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald had now succeeded Mr. Baldwin as Prime Minister. The post of Secretary of State for India was given to Mr. Wedgwood Benn, who had had a long and distinguished career in the House of Commons to his credit on the Liberal benches, and who, although he had never held any major Ministerial post, was known as a brilliant Parliamentarian. He had, it is true, no previous experience of India or of Indian affairs, but that deficiency indeed he shared with many of his predecessors. Mr. Wedgwood Benn, during the comparatively short time he reigned at the India Office never understood the elementary fact that an Indian extremist, like the merchant in the bazaar, asks a great deal more than he ever expects to get, and even if by any chance he

is taken at his full face value, complains that he has been treated in the most niggardly fashion. In this peculiarity Mr. Benn was not alone. A great many of his colleagues, both on the front and back benches, and even on the opposite benches of the House of Commons, shared his pathetic lack of intuition.

For the time being, however, there was no outward symptom of any change of attitude on the part of the Government towards ourselves. In the month of June Mr. Ramsay MacDonald entertained the members of the Royal Commission at a large dinner-party at the Carlton Hotel. The speeches were all that could be desired from our point of view, particularly that of the Prime Minister, who again committed himself unequivocally to the line of maintaining unimpaired the status of the Commission. Although obviously no one could have expected him to commit himself prematurely to an endorsement of our suggestions, which were not due to be made public for many months, it was essential for us to be assured that the Prime Minister still regarded the original procedure, namely, that our report should not only be presented to Parliament, but that it should be considered by Parliament, as the correct and proper course to be pursued in due season. So far we had

been given every reassurance on that account.

Our Indian Central Committee had arrived soon after ourselves in London, and we forthwith continued our joint sittings in a Committee Room of the House of Lords. But most of the evidence we took was wearisome repetition of what we had heard already, and merely constituted a waste of everybody's time which, in our case, especially as everyone was impatient to receive our report, was more than valuable. The majority of the witnesses were Civil Servants and officials, who, while they were quite willing to supply us with general information, were most properly reluctant to commit themselves to any particular constructive suggestions.

Sir John Simon soon after leaving India had written a remarkably well-reasoned and convincing memorandum for the Viceroy, suggesting the advantages of the latter exercising his powers under the Government of India Act to prolong the session of the Assembly. As the general election for the Assembly was due to take place in the autumn, and as our report could not be published in the current year, the Swarajists in the new Parliament would hold the field with the Nehru report as the only constructive proposal if Sir John's suggestion was not

adopted. Fortunately the Viceroy agreed to accept this advice.

In the last week of June Sir John Simon held a special meeting of the Commission to decide upon the framework of our report. We were provided with a room in the Law Courts, and it was here throughout long days of incessant work, week after week, month after month, the two volumes were composed. It is not my purpose to describe our procedure at these the only official meetings of the Commission which were entirely confidential and which must remain so—but a few facts about the methods of composition which we adopted cannot come within the category of indiscretion. Sir John Simon was in the habit of preparing a memorandum upon whatever subject we were discussing, but he almost invariably invited one or other of his colleagues to do likewise. These memoranda were thoroughly and exhaustively discussed line by line, and by the time the Commission had finished with them they were hardly recognizable by their authors, but the result belied the proverb that too many cooks spoil the broth. I made a note in my diary at the time that we were all very ingenious at picking holes in other people's suggestions, but I must at once add that as a team we

worked harmoniously together. Never did I hear either an impatient or discordant phrase uttered. Moreover, considering the number of problems to be settled, and their great complexity, the amount of agreement and the facility with which we agreed was remarkably significant, all the more so in view of the fact that there were at least three schools of political thought represented on the Commission. Every line, almost every word, of the report was most carefully weighed and considered. It must be remembered that we were writing mainly for an Indian public, and that it is one of the idiosyncrasies of Indian politicians that they are too apt to read meanings into sentences which they were never intended to bear. The Secretariat was, as it had been throughout our labours, invaluable, Mr. Stewart [1], Mr. Bhore, Mr. Carter and Mr. Perry rendering to us assistance which cannot be over-estimated. By the time we separated for the autumn recess we had made a very distinct advance. In October we resumed our sittings in very earnest, making what we thought rapid, what the world outside, less cognizant than ourselves of the immensity of the problem, deemed tardy, progress.

[1] Now Sir Findlater Stewart, K.C.B., Permanent Under Secretary, India Office.

But now events took a turn which ultimately changed all the best-laid plans of the Imperial Parliament and its established procedure for unravelling the Indian constitutional problem. To make the whole story coherent it is necessary to revert to our last interview with Lord Irwin in Delhi, when Sir John Simon approached him with the suggestion that there should be an interchange of letters between himself and the Prime Minister embodying a request from the Royal Commission that its terms of reference should be made sufficiently wide to include the discussion of the possibility of the Indian States coming within the scope of any scheme of reform we might recommend. Lord Irwin had been much impressed with the idea and had readily acquiesced. It was accordingly agreed that such an interchange of letters might take place in October and be published in the Press. In the meantime Lord Irwin came to England. He had evidently conceived the notion that it would be opportune for him to make some public statement amplifying the Montagu-Chelmsford declaration. He was anxious, in view of all that had transpired in the tentative negotiations between himself and the Nehru party, to include the phrase "Dominion status" in

any pronouncement that he might make. Had he been of a more subtle disposition I should have suspected him of being influenced by the consideration that India was worth a phrase. We were opposed to this idea, as the expression, being indefinite, either would commit the Government to something it could not concede or would raise false hopes in India. Originally a suggestion was made to include the phrase in our correspondence, "the grant of Dominion status as soon as may be," as far as I recollect were the words proposed to be used. Sir John Simon asked that the words might be deleted, a request that was acceded to. It was also agreed that the letters in their amended form should be published by the end of the month. From that time until 29th October we heard no more of the matter officially. But a few days before that date I met a House of Commons colleague in the Carlton Club who evidently took it for granted that a member of the Indian Statutory Commission would have been made fully acquainted with everything that was proceeding behind the scenes. I was in almost complete ignorance of the various intrigues which had so important a bearing upon the work which partly rested on our shoulders, but I elicited from him in-

formation to the effect that Lord Irwin by the time he had left England had made up his mind to make a statement, with the offending words included, on his arrival in India. The Secretary of State had evidently consulted the authorities representing the Liberal Party as to the wisdom of such a course, and I understood that the Liberals were opposed to its adoption. Mr. Baldwin was at Aix-les-Bains, but an airman messenger took despatches to him asking for his opinion. Report had it that his answer evidently expressed agreement, although it subsequently transpired that this was only partially true. In the meantime, most of the leading members of the Conservative Party, who were strongly opposed to Lord Irwin's proposal, had held an indignation meeting. I left the Club feeling somewhat incensed with Sir John Simon, as I imagined that he must have been in possession of all these details, and not to have made all the members of the Commission the depositories of his confidence in this matter would have argued an unpardonable lack of good faith. My surprise can be better imagined than expressed when, at our next Conference, Sir John explained that he was as much in the dark as the rest of us, although he understood that the Party leaders had been

apprised of what was taking place behind the scenes. We had all agreed that any mention of "Dominion status" would be an egregious mistake—either it meant something, and if so it might prejudice the work of the Commission, or if it meant nothing it was worse than useless to mention such a phrase. We all knew our Indian extremists well enough by this time to realize that when they ask for some concession, for example, the promise of "Dominion status," and when they asseverate that if the concession is made to them they will be content, we could count on them to at once weigh in with a request for further concessions. The more demands are complied with in the East, the more insatiable becomes the petitioner. They would never be satisfied, or at any rate would never express themselves as satisfied.

The real danger, as it appeared to me, was that Party differences would, as a result of these uncalled-for and premature announcements, begin to show themselves on the subject of India in the British Parliament, a danger which had hitherto been successfully obviated, and which in the opinion of the Commission should continue to be averted at all costs.

Sir John Simon had seen the Secretary of

State who had asked him the following questions: "Did the Commission at any time object to Lord Irwin making any statement, or did you merely take the view that it was not your concern?" Sir John Simon said he felt it was only fair to tell the Secretary of State that we had never as a Commission objected to Lord Irwin making a statement. I argued that I imagined Mr. Wedgwood Benn had put this question in order that if the answer was in the affirmative he would have a good defence, and that supposing the Viceroy's statement misfired, the Secretary of State would be able to say: "Well, the Commission never objected." I accordingly ventured to hazard the opinion that the right answer to have given the Secretary of State would have been that although we had never protested he must not take it from us that we did not object, it was merely that we felt it was not our business to record either our assent or our dissent. The statement made by Lord Passfield subsequently in the House of Lords as to the attitude adopted by the Commission bears out that my reply would have been the right one. We all felt very disturbed at these proceedings, and one of our number threatened that if Lord Irwin's statement in any way prejudiced the work

of the Commission he would resign. On the following day Sir John Simon informed us that he had had an interview with Mr. Baldwin, who explained to him that he had only given his approval to Lord Irwin's making a statement provided that the leaders of the other parties and the Commission were in complete agreement over the matter. Evidently Mr. Baldwin had been entirely misled. I met him in the lobby of the House of Commons that evening and he agreed that the whole matter was in a state of complete confusion.

In order to appreciate the subsequent course of events, it is necessary to make a more detailed reference to the interchange of letters between Sir John Simon acting in the name and with the approval of the Royal Commission, and the Prime Minister. These letters were published in all the London and Indian newspapers. The draft received our unanimous consent, it is true, but had we known what subsequent use was to be made of our suggestion, or had we realized what the treatment of our report was to be by the Government, it is hardly to be supposed that we should have taken the initiative in such a departure. There is certainly nothing to indicate from the reply of the Prime Minister

that there was any idea of ignoring the Commission's report. On the contrary, if the words mean anything at all and are not intended to mislead, it is obvious from them that the purpose was that the report would inevitably form a basis for any subsequent procedure. The test is that a draft of the letter from the Prime Minister was submitted by him for the approval of the Commission, and it must be quite apparent that if the Commissioners had read into it any scheme to jettison their report they would have never allowed Sir John Simon to proceed any further in the matter.

On 30th October, after attending a meeting of the Commission, I went down in due course to the House of Commons, where I found the speech which Lord Irwin had delivered on his arrival in India being distributed as a White Paper. I ascertained the views of several of my colleagues on the subject, including Mr. Vernon Hartshorn, who agreed with me that the statement was fairly innocuous in that there was no time limit mentioned as to when that unintelligible ideal "Dominion status" would be realized, and that it in no way seemed to "scrap" the Commission, a purpose which the Government was already being suspected of enter-

taining. But I felt that even its apparent harmlessness might render it harmful. It might prove completely disappointing to Indians when it was discovered that they had gained nothing substantial thereby. Moreover, I could not resist the reflection that we were not treating them fairly, although the Swarajists had bluffed so much themselves they could hardly blame the British Government for sometimes adopting their own methods.

The subsequent week was an anxious one for the Commission. What we dreaded had come to pass—a debate in both Houses upon the Indian situation. I heard most of the debate in the House of Lords, which in many respects was unhelpful, but fortunately Lord Parmoor and Lord Passfield were both so discursive and displayed so little knowledge of their subject that we could fairly hope that not even Indians could interpret anything particularly significant in what they had said. Lord Birkenhead was by no means conciliatory or tactful. The debate in the House of Commons was on a higher plane but did not serve any more useful a purpose than that in the Upper House. On the whole these academic Parliamentary discussions in no way prejudiced us in our labours.

The Commission in the meantime continued its sittings as if nothing had happened. Our Indian colleagues of the Central Wing had insisted on bringing out their report instead of waiting until ours appeared, although we had offered them the hospitality of our own pages, suggesting that their report should be included as an annexure of our own. It received very little attention. The authors had been too much prejudiced by acute communal differences among themselves, and consequently the published result of their labours merely furnished another conspicuous proof of how difficult it is for Indians to arrive at any agreed decision for the reform of their own constitution.

As our task neared completion we all agreed that it would be expedient for the two volumes of the report to be published at intervals rather than simultaneously. The credit for this wise decision rests with Sir John Simon, whose instinct in the matter, as in so many others, was unerring. He explained that it was absolutely essential that if our recommendations were to be properly appreciated a true picture of contemporary India should, as a preliminary, be made available to the public. If the two volumes were published simultaneously, the recom-

mendations would be read first and in most cases the first volume would never be read at all. The result was as we expected. The first volume was widely read and produced the desired effect. We also decided that we would not follow the ordinary procedure of royal commission reports and prepare an elaborate summary of our recommendations at the end, as it was so supremely important that the recommendations should be read in conjunction with the reasons that prompted them.

At last the day of signing the first volume arrived. The printed sheet of the preface which the Home Secretary was to convey to His Majesty was produced in our room at the Law Courts, and to this we appended our signatures. A few days afterwards we signed the second volume in the same fashion, with feelings of intense relief that our monumental task was fulfilled.

By the middle of July it was possible to form some estimate of the reception of the report in England, India, and in other countries. I believe no report of any Royal Commission has ever had so large a sale. In foreign countries it had a remarkably favourable Press, particularly in the United States of America, where the general com-

ment was that a great deal of the sympathy which previously had been evoked on behalf of the Indian nationalists would not have been forthcoming had the real conditions of India been better appreciated. In England its reception was most gratifying, although sharp criticisms were neither lacking nor unexpected from those who deemed India unfit for any form of self-government and from those who regarded India as fully qualified for independence. One distinguished ex-Governor flippantly remarked that he considered our first volume was a very adequate refutation of our second!

With regard to its reception in India we could easily bear with fortitude the wholesale denunciation which appeared in the Swaraj Press before the effervescent critics who composed these attacks could have had time to look at the outside cover of the report. At home comments were made in *The Times* and other newspapers to the effect that the unqualified disappointment which had been expressed by all parties without exception in India was somewhat disconcerting. If those who expressed any astonishment on this account had had the same amount of experience of the Indian political intelligentsia as had fallen to our lot, they would

have remained as unmoved by these fulminations as we were.

The point to be remembered was that not one of our critics so far had come forward with any alternative suggestions which had not been instantly denounced by his own countrymen. At the time of the setting up of the Round Table Conference ours was the only agreed scheme in existence. Moreover, for nearly three years we had weighed all the alternatives to our suggestions and found them hopelessly wanting. As to this phrase "Dominion status," the intentional omission of which from our report was the chief source of criticism and which caused Mr. Sastri in my hearing to say rendered the report a "dead letter," it was typical that Indian criticism should hinge upon anything so fragile.

By the autumn the Round Table Conference had come into being. At what precise point in the history of these negotiations it became apparent that the Government had jettisoned our report and turned a cold shoulder upon its authors it is not very easy to determine. But from all the evidence available it is obvious that an influential body of Indian political leaders had only agreed to attend as delegates at the Conference at St. James's Palace on the strict

understanding that our report should not form the basis of its deliberations and that no member of the Commission was to serve thereon. It was in the face of such obduracy that the Government finally abandoned the original procedure. But it was very intriguing for members of the Commission to watch at a distance the immediate result. At the first Round Table Conference what few decisions the delegates arrived at were *malgré eux* in accordance with our findings, and wherever they disagreed with our report they made no progress whatsoever.

Two fundamental difficulties face those in whose hands the solution of this vast problem rests. The first is to obtain any agreement amongst the numerous parties, castes, sects and creeds upon the reforms. This may not be an insuperable difficulty, but it is only the first of the difficulties which has to be surmounted. The second and much the greater difficulty, when once a scheme has been agreed upon, will be to correlate it to the circumstances of India and to make it operative. In this connection I would quote a passage from our report which all those Indian critics of ours who raised such a clamour on its publication would do well to treasure in their hearts:

"First of all, we have endeavoured to bring before those whose duty it is to provide for India's constitutional future a realization of the facts of the situation, those stubborn facts which no amount of rhetoric or appeal to abstract principles can alter. The immense area and population of India, the diversities of race, creed and caste, the existence of the Indian States, the predominance in numbers of the rural population, the high percentage of illiteracy, and the standing menace of the North-West Frontier, are all facts which no person, British or Indian, who has to deal with the constitutional problem of India can possibly ignore. These facts must be faced. Their existence cannot in any way be allowed to invalidate the solemn pledge of the British people with regard to the progressive realization of responsible government in British India. They may be compared to the physical features of a site for a city, which do not prevent the city being built, though they condition its plan and the length of time which must elapse before its completion."

Both Indian and British politicians who are now engaged upon the unenviable task of finding a solution to this problem have consistently ignored the facts and the circum-

stances of India. It is because the Commissioners faced them, because they recorded the facts without partiality or prejudice, it is because they founded their opinions upon the facts, that it may well be that their recommendations will yet be vindicated.

It is no part of my purpose in these pages to follow the fortunes of the Round Table Conference which again assembled in the autumn of 1931. Rather has it been my intention to offer testimony of the genuine and disinterested effort made by the Commission to reach a solution which, while we hoped it would satisfy within proper limits the aspirations of those Indians who very naturally desire a continued progression towards self-government, would safeguard the interests of the silent millions whose welfare is our first responsibility.

I trust that I shall not be thought egotistical if in conclusion I reproduce a passage from a speech I delivered to an empty House of Commons in the autumn session of 1931 on the motion approving the Government's Indian policy:

"My appointment to the Indian Statutory Commission raised in me hopes that I might be of some service in elucidating the problems which are involved in this constitutional

difficulty; and, if I may be allowed a personal note, it was to me the keenest disappointment that the result of three long years of steadfast and unremitting endeavour, exclusively devoted to what we imagined to be the best interests of the Indians themselves, far from achieving, had frustrated that ambition. But I can assure the House that no feeling of resentment, if ever such a thing was in my mind, would hinder me from wishing God-speed to those who have taken on the work where we left it off, and who have now to face up to the inexorable facts, the perplexities and the difficulties which we had to encounter, and praying that they, both Indians and English alike, will arrive at decisions yielding results which will be for the lasting peace and prosperity of the Indian Empire."

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